

THE HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL ASSAM

(From the Thirteenth to the Seventeenth century)

A critical and comprehensive history of Assam during the first four centuries of Ahom Rule, based on original Assamese sources, available both in India and England.

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Reader in History

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**TO
THE SACRED MEMORY
OF MY FATHER**

FOREWORD

The state of Assam has certain special features of its own which distinguish it to some extent from the rest of India. One of these features is a tradition of historical writing, such as is not to be found in most parts of the Indian sub-continent. This tradition has left important literary documents in the form of the Buranjis or chronicles, written in simple straightforward prose and recording the historical traditions of the various states and dynasties which ruled Assam before it was incorporated into the domains of the East India Company. These works form an imperishable record of the political history of the region and throw much light also upon the social life of the times.

It is probable, though not proven with certainty, that this historical tradition owes its inception to the invasion of the Ahoms, who entered the valley of the Brahmaputra from what is now Burma in 1228, for it is from this momentous year that the Buranji tradition dates. Though some of the chronicles incorporate older legends borrowed from the Hindu epic tradition, the rich historical record commences with the invasion of Sukapha and his brothers. For our knowledge of the earlier period we have to rely upon inscriptions and passing references in non-historical sources.

With the aid of the Buranji material, taken in conjunction with all other available sources of knowledge, Dr. N. N. Acharyya has produced an excellent reconstruction of the history of Assam during the first four centuries of Ahom rule. I believe that this work forms as complete a picture as it is possible to produce of the process of Ahom expansion. Its author has made every possible effort to check his sources with the aid of whatever other material was available to him. On the whole they emerge triumphantly from the test of historical criticism. Allowing for minor inaccuracies, the Buranjis give reliable accounts of the history of the kingdoms and dynasties to which they refer, and the main task of the modern historian in dealing with these sources is not so much their criticism as their elucidation. Dr. Acharyya has given to the world a very important study of the history of medieval Assam, and I wholeheartedly recommend it to readers everywhere.

A. L. BASHAM
Canberra, 1966

PREFACE

In recent years there has been a growing recognition of the importance of Assam's strategic and economic factors. In view of this demand for information the progress of historical research has received new incentive and brought to light new material widely scattered in the Buranjis or chronicles of Assam. The material of the Buranjis is the outcome of the highest historical and spiritual devotion and processed through the religious fervour of the Assamese. The land of Assam may well be proud of its Buranjis which threw so much light on the past history of Assam. Most of the Buranjis have now been published, and many have been translated, thanks, largely to the efforts of late lamented Professor S. K. Bhuyan. But the comparison and assessment of their data are necessary before a definite history of the period can be written. The material of the Buranjis like all the medieval historical writing require also thorough sifting in the light of all available evidence before they can be made to produce sober history. The present work aims not only to provide a most valuable analysis of the contents of the Buranjis which are on the whole found to be accurate and sober accounts of events but also coordination of this material and to indicate its importance as the sources of history of Assam.

The period from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century is a significant epoch in the history of Assam. Assam history takes on a different complexion from that which it had in the earlier period, for, from this time onward, written chronicles make their appearance, and it is no longer necessary to reconstruct the history of the region from the incomplete evidence of inscriptions. It is a most important period the book has dealt with in the history of Assam—a period marked by the gradual spread of Ahom power and the slow assimilation of the invaders in the great body of Hindu culture, without their in any way losing their individuality as a separate people. Indeed in some ways it is perhaps the most important of all the volumes of this kind, since it provides a detailed account of a darkest period of Assam's history.

The object of the present volume is to provide in the light of original sources available both in India and England, a narrative not merely of the successive stages in the establishment of Ahom supremacy in Assam, but also the fact of racial and linguistic harmony that Assam attained at this time by creating a sense of mutual cooperation and brotherhood among her people of heterogeneous origin. The foundation of a new religion based on the enlightened doctrine of Bhakti which stood against excessive ritualism and caste prejudices and stressed the equality of men is also exhaustively analysed and critically examined in this volume. The influx of sources in the form of Buranjis, Puthis, Vangsaivalis, traditions and legends has made the task of their arrangement and collation a difficult one. Adequate attention, therefore, has to be paid to check the historical value of these voluminous material through their comparison and corroboration with Persian sources of more historical value. The scientific confirmation of the earthquakes and eclipse of the sun recorded in the Buranjis has been made by referring them to the records in the register of H. M. Nautical Almanac Office, Royal Greenwich Observatory, Herstmonceux, Sussex. In addition, the work throws sidelights on the activities of the Bhuyan aristocracy whose patriotic enterprises were always source of prosperity for the entire land.

This work has, in fact, grown out of my thesis, *The History of Medieval Assam, 1228-1603*, which was submitted to and approved by the University of London for the degree of Ph. D., in July, 1957. The work of revision of the Thesis was done by me in the midst of heavy pre-occupation of the work of teaching and other literary works within and outside Assam. Some of them are like the secretary of the History Section of the 22nd Session of All India Oriental Conference, Secretary of the Assam Historical Society, Secretary of the Compilation Committee of Assam History in Assamese under the supervision of Asom Sahitya Sabha, charge of the Seminar Library of the History Department of Gauhati University, Delegate of Gauhati University to the Allahabad Session of Indian History Congress, Professor-in-charge of Historical Excursion of Gauhati University as well as the Academic cum Cultural Exchange Programme of the Gauhati University to other prominent Indian Universities. In course of revision of the Thesis, I have added new informa-

tion and omitted old ones in the light of up-to-date researches which resulted in entirely rewriting the Chapters III, VI and VII. I have also since engaged myself in the work of investigating the various problems of medieval Assam's history, and I hope ultimately to complete a detailed survey of the history and culture of the people of Assam during the whole medieval period.

The narrative of the work is based mainly on the Buranjis, the details of which are appended in the bibliography. In this book I have attempted first, to discuss geography, people, land and the sources, laying special emphasis on the Buranjis—their character, originality and importance as sources of Indian history and that of Assam in particular ; secondly to deal with political condition of Assam and its neighbouring countries—Burma, China, Tibet and the rest of India early in the thirteenth century ; thirdly, to trace the origin of the Ahoms, their original homeland, route of migration, settlement, expansion and integration in the Brahmaputra valley, their gradual Hinduisation and their system of administration along with the name of the land, "Assam" ; fourthly, to bring into light little known history of the later Kamrup kings, the Koches, the Kacharis, the Jayantias, the Chutias and the Nagas ; finally, to show a cultural renaissance in Assam inaugurated by Sankardev, which fully influenced the mind and culture of the people to commence a new era in their history.

Many months have been spent in compiling the letters, lists, tables and supplementary information which appear in as many as nine appendices, followed by a long bibliography, a full glossary and a descriptive index. There are altogether ten illustrations and a map showing physical features, boundaries of various states and distribution of tribes of medieval Assam. I have made extensive use of them in the text, and have included them in the volume in the hope that they will be of use to students of political and cultural history of medieval Assam.

It is a pleasant duty for me to acknowledge the kindness of my teachers and friends from whose help and advice I have benefited. I wish to acknowledge very sincerely the help and advice of Dr. A. L. Basham, now Professor in the Department of Asian Civilization in the School of General Studies, The Australian

National University, Canberra, who has been chiefly responsible for the supervision of my work in the University of London. I am extremely grateful to him for the great latitude he allowed me in respect of my views, but insisted upon precise expression and careful documentation. He has laid me under special obligation for kindly writing a short "foreword" to the book. I like also to acknowledge my debts to my examiners Professor D. G. E. Hall of the University of London and Dr. C. Collin Davies of the University of Oxford for their valued criticisms ; and also to several others who gave me very valuable assistance in connection with special aspects of this book ; chief among these are Professor C. V. F. Haimendorf, Dr. P. Hardy and Dr. Hla Pe. I am also indebted to the Royal Greenwich Observatory, Herstmonceaux, Sussex, for information regarding the eclipse of 1486.

I must also acknowledge the advice of Dr. B. C. Browne, Trinity College, Cambridge, and Brigadier, G. Bomford at Brasenose College, Oxford, and Earnest Tillotson, Honorary Secretary, Seismological Committee, British Association for the Advancement of Science, London, who kindly gave me information regarding earthquakes, which unfortunately was of little help to me in writing this book. I am also grateful to Dr. R. C. Majumdar and Dr. D. C. Sarkar, whom I met at London during the Asian History Conference of 1956, for their valuable suggestions in connection with my queries on some special aspects of my work. For help in preparing the index, I am indebted to my student friends, Messrs Asong Singsit and A. Rahman of Gauhati University. I have also the pleasant duty to acknowledge my gratitude to Professor Philips, the staff and the post-graduate students of the Department of History and other departments of the School of Oriental and African Studies, for their discussion and help at the Seminars and in the Reading Room. I must also express my sincere gratitude to the Librarians and staffs of the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, the India Office Library, the British Museum Library, the Library of the University of London, and that of the Royal Asiatic Society, for their kindness and invaluable help.

Finally, I am greatly indebted to my friend Sri M. N. Dutta Baruah, M. A. (Cal.) for his very kindly undertaking the publication of the book from the Dutta Baruah and Co., Gauhati.

I once more wish to express my sincere appreciation to him, a sympathetic friend and well-wisher of writers and authors of Assam in particular with his bountiful help my book has seen the light of the day. The friendly co-operation, careful printing and smooth management of the whole work by the staff members of the Sreeguru Press, Maligaon are appreciated greatly. My thanks must also go to all those who have helped me in many ways but who must go unnamed. The shortcoming of the book, of course, will be mine. I sincerely believe that the book will meet the needs of all those for whom it is intended.

University of Gauhati
September 1966.

NAGENDRA NATH ACHARYYA

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ABBREVIATIONS

A. B.	Bhuyan S. K. (<i>ed</i>)	Assam Buranji
A. C. R.		Assam Census Report
A.D.G.		Assam District Gazetteers
A.H.B.	Barua G.C. (<i>ed</i>)	Ahom Buranji
A.R.C.A.		Administrative Report on the Census of Assam
B.C.R.		Bengal Census Report
B.D.G.		Bengal District Gazetteers
B.D.R.		Bengal District Records
C.B.	Barua J.K. (<i>ed</i>)	Chutia Buranji
C.H.I.	Haig W. (<i>ed</i>)	Cambridge History of India, Vol. III
C.R.		Calcutta Review
D.A.B.	Bhuyan S.K. (<i>ed</i>)	Deodhai Assam Buranji
D.R.V.	Goswami H.C. (<i>ed</i>)	Darrang Raj Vangsavali
E.H.K.	Barua K.L.	Early History of Kamarupa
E.I.M.		Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica
G.C.	Thakur R.C.	Guru Charitra
G.U.B.S.S.		Gazetteers of Upper Burma and the Shan States
H.A.	Gait E.	History of Assam
H.B.	Dacca University	History of Bengal
H.C.P.A.	P. C. Choudhury	History of Civilisation of the people of Assam
H.S.	Elias N.	History of the Shans
I.A.		Indian Antiquities
I.A.Y.		Indian Antiquary
I.H.Q.		Indian Historical Quarterly
J.A.S.B.		Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal
J.B.O.R.S.		Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society
J.B.	Bhuyan S.K. (<i>ed</i>)	Jayantia Buranji
J.A.R.S.		Journal of Assam Research Society
J.I.H.		Journal of Indian History
J.U.G.		Journal of University of Gauhati

K.B.	Bhuyan S.K. (ed)	Kachari Buranji
K.R.B.	„	Kamrup Buranji
K.S.	Bhattacharya P.N. (ed)	Kamarupa Sasanavali
L.S.I.	Grierson G.	Linguistic Survey of India
M.A.S.B.		Memoirs of Asiatic Society of Bengal
M.C.E.F. .	Fisher	Memoirs of countries on & near eastern frontier of Sylhet
M.N.E.F.P.	Bhattacharya S.N.	Mughal north-east frontier policy.
N.O.		Numismata Orientalia
P.A.B.	Goswami H.C. (ed)	Purani Assam Buranji
R.B.D.		Report on the Bengal Districts
R.C.K.A.S.		Report and the conspectus of Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti.
R.E.F.B.I.		Report on the eastern frontier of British India.
R.O.R.A.S.		Report on the old records of Assam Secretariat
R.P.H.R.A.	Gait E.	Report on the progress of Historical Research in Assam
R. .B.		Rudra Singhar Buranji
S.A.A.	Hunter W. W.	Statistical Account of Assam
S.A.B.	„	Statistical Account of Bengal
S.H.K.	Vasu N. N.	Social History of Kamrup
S.R.B.G.		Selections from the Records of the Bengal government.
T.N.	Minhaj-us-Siraj	Tabakat-i-Nasiri

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Scope of the Work—nature of treatment :

The history of Medieval Assam offers an almost unexplored and uninvestigated field of study. The scope of our present work is the political history of Assam from the beginning of the thirteenth to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Little work has been done on the period under review. The history of this period forms one of the most interesting but little known chapters in the annals of Assam. Here an humble attempt has been made, we think for the first time, to reproduce in comprehensive manner, as based on original sources, the political history of this fascinating period of Assam's history. With the centre of political gravity shifting from Kamrup to Kamatapur in the west and Garhgaon in the east, the period saw the threshold of a new phase, characterised by the arrival, growth and consolidation of a new power, the Ahoms. We have shown in this treatise how the different parts of the Brahmaputra Valley and the various tribes of the extreme North-Eastern Frontier and the Surma Valley were conquered one after another by a new House of Shan invaders. The period saw also the development of a deliberate policy on the part of the Muhammadans in the west and the Naras in the east to subvert the political unity and reduce the frontiers of Medieval Assam. The treatise has taken into account the rise and consolidation of many powers—the Ahoms, the Kacharis, the Koches, the Chutias and the Jayantias. The period under consideration also marked the settlement in Assam of several hordes of immigrants from Upper Burma, Western Yunnan and North and Eastern Bengal.

Assam is in many ways a land of exceptional interest. With her multifarious people and races, her Tribal Problems and

strategic position, she presents a very variegated and engrossing field of study. She was the first abode in India of the Mongolian immigrants from Hukong Valley and South-Western China. Although in the plains, a good deal of this population has lost its original physiognomy and other affinities, in respect of physique, language, religion and social custom, its relation to other branches of the same family forms a most interesting line of enquiry for the ethnologists. The religion of the Assamese People has an all-India importance. Here the strange *Tantrik* developments of both Hinduism and Buddhism appeared in strength very early and much influenced the religion of the Indian sub-Continent. The Goddess *Kamakhya*, on the Nilachal Hill is still worshipped for the attainment of 'Moksha' or 'Nirvana' as the omnipotent and omnipresent supreme authority. The country is well known in Hindu traditions as a land of sorcery, magic and witchcraft.

Though little in the way of art and architecture has survived from the period under review, it is clear that much creative work took place in these fields of activity. Dalton speaks highly of the architecture of Medieval Assam.¹ In describing the Ahom palace at Garhgaon, a historian in the seventeenth century says that "my pen fails to describe in detail the other arts and rare invention employed in decorating the woodwork of this palace. Probably nowhere in the World can wooden houses be built with such decoration and figure-carving as by the people of this country."²

Assam is one of the few states in India whose people checked the tide of Muhammadan conquest and maintained their independence in the face of repeated attempts to subvert it. From the beginning of the Muslim rule in India, several attempts were made to bring the whole of Assam under its sway, but historical records both in Assamese and Persian show

¹ J. A. S. B., 1855., p. 13

² Fathiya-i-ibrya, J. B. O. R. S., 1915., p. 193.

that each and every invasion was ably resisted. From the strategic point of view, this was by no means an ordinary success on the part of the Assamese People.

Assam has always held a distinct and independent political existence. "Though the process of Hinduisation of the non-Aryan tribes went on from early times the converts were very few and the province remained, therefore, a land of heterogeneous social strains with linguistic divergences.¹ At different periods of Assam's history she became a refuge of many peoples. In fact, she was one of the few places in India which may be "looked upon as a federation hall, where the most ancient and the most modern, the most antiquated and the most up to date, are found to meet together upon terms of perfect cordiality. The followers of all schools of philosophy—the *Vedic*, the *Pauranik* and the *Tantrik* have thrived here equally well, and the people of all the races, the Aryans and non-Aryans, the Hindus and non-Hindus have equally contributed to the building up of the social fabric of Kamarupa (Assam). In a word, with the ancient history of this glorious land is indissolubly bound up the social, religious and national history of the whole of India."² Racial and linguistic harmony having become a general ideal for all the Indian People, can be arrived at, if Assam in her own way begins the task by creating a sense of mutual co-operation and brotherhood among her people of heterogeneous origin, and her culture, having a distinct entity and independent character of its own, can thus contribute best to the culture and prosperity of India as a whole.

In spite of all this, there is probably no part of India about whose past less is generally known. In the history of India as a whole, Assam is seldom mentioned, and few writers are found to have devoted more than a dozen lines to the treatment of the history of this province. But the history of Assam, whether

¹ H. A., Intro. p. VIII.

² S. H. K., V. I., pp. 1-2.

Ancient or Medieval, is as important and interesting as the history of any other part of India. So far as the period under discussion is concerned, a few writers have, however, dealt with it in their own way.

In 1800, Wade wrote "An Account of Assam."¹ This is a voluminous production. The writer appears to have taken great pains in gathering materials from the *Buranjis* and the chronicles. But the dates mentioned in his work are not all correct. It remained in manuscript in the place where it was possibly first deposited, and no attempt was made to bring it into light and publish it until 1927. Thus it was not available to Gait. In 1841, Robinson published his "Descriptive Account of Assam."² As the title indicates it is mainly a work on the geography and the natural aspects of the country rather than its political history. It is poor in assessing the historical materials of the period under consideration. In 1872, Blochmann wrote an article headed "Koch Bihar, Koch Hajo, and Asam in the 16th and 17th centuries, according to the Akbarnamah, the Padishahnamah and the Fathiyah-i-Ibriya."³ This is a picture from a one-sided angle and is neither accurate nor complete. The *Buranjis* and the local chronicles appear to have been sealed books to its author. In 1905, Sir Edward A. Gait published "A History of Assam"⁴. This is no doubt the first historical work on Assam, on the lines of modern research. He has elaborately discussed the history of Ancient and Medieval Assam but has hardly done justice to the period under discussion. He has written hardly a page on the history of the Chutias, which deserves a chapter in itself. His contribution on the history of Kamrup or Kamata from the beginning of the thirteenth to the rise of the Koches in the beginning of the sixteenth century is practically nothing. He has not dealt separately the history of the Nagas. Moreover, the work is open to criticism in several particulars. It was compiled with the aid of *pundits*, many of

¹ Wade, J. P., An Account of Assam, Ed., Sarma, B., Calcutta, 1927.

² Robinson, W., Descriptive Account of Assam, Calcutta, 1841.

³ J. A. S. B., 1872, pp. 49-101.

⁴ Gait, E. A., A History of Assam, second Ed., Calcutta, 1926.

whose translations are incorrect. These had access to manuscript materials which are still unpublished, and some of which apparently contained details not mentioned in known *Buranjis*. Gait has often made use of such materials without mentioning his source, or giving his readers any idea of its origin. Thus his history is by no means up to the best modern standard of historical scholarship. In 1929, Bhattacharyya published "A History of Mughal North-East Frontier Policy."¹ This is devoted mainly to the diplomatic relations of the Mughal Empire with Cooch Behar, Kamrup and Assam. The book records the accounts of the Muslim raids and invasions of Assam and is written from the point of view of the Mughal Empire. Its contribution to the history of Assam is practically nothing. Moreover, many of his conclusions are incorrect. In 1933, Barua published his "Early History of Kamarupa."² It is a systematic account of the early history of Kamrup and has no bearing on the history of Medieval Assam. Its contribution to geography and ethnology is negligible.

From the above review, it becomes evident that there are no books on Assam describing the period under review in detail. But it was during this period that the Bhuyans, a new class of nobility, came into prominence and fought to their utmost for the defence, integration and progress of Assam. A new system of Government, the administrative system of the Ahoms, peculiar in Indian history, proved successful in a country, remote and bounded by natural defences. The *Paik* system of land tenure was established by the warrior Ahoms. The introduction of historiography into Assam by the Ahoms, one of their greatest cultural contributions, also took place during this period. The Kacharis were driven to the further south to Maibong from the Subansiri Valley. The kingdom of the Chutias was annihilated and annexed to the Ahom country. In Lower Assam a new

Bhattacharyya, S. N., A History of Mughal North-East Frontier Policy, Calcutta, 1929.

Barua, K. L., E. H. K., Shillong, 1933.

House, the Koches, came into existence and proved the greatest obstacle to the penetration of Islam. A perpetual policy of repression and violation was undertaken by the Ahoms against the indefatigable and indomitable Naga Tribes. By far the greatest innovation of this period is the foundation of a new religion based on the enlightened doctrine of *Bhakti* as revealed in the *Sastras*. It was a cultural and progressive movement which laid emphasis on the unity of the Godhead, stood against excessive ritualism, preached a faith based on constant devotion, fought against caste prejudices and stressed the equality of man. The preacher of this faith was the reformer Sankaradeva, who, founding *Satras* and erecting *Namghar*, propagated his liberal doctrine throughout the province and influenced the Assamese People to inaugurate a literary renaissance. All these features give importance to the period under discussion and make a new and thorough study of it desirable.

It is not because of the paucity of materials and their fabulous nature that a good history of Medieval Assam is yet to be written, but owing to weakness in properly assessing the known materials. That the Ahoms established a powerful kingdom in the North-Eastern Quarter of the Indian sub-Continent and ruled there gloriously for about six hundred years, is a fact which appears to have been almost ignored at the present time. Worse still, is the fact that no reference to the most important achievement of Assam in checking the Muslim penetration in the North-Eastern Frontier of the Medieval Hindustan, finds a place in any standard work. It is unfortunate that while a number of excellent histories of this period have been written in recent years on the different provinces of India, no historian since Gait has attempted to study this fascinating and patriotic chapter of Indian history according to the principles of modern historical research. In short, the history of Medieval Assam remains practically a virgin field of study, and further work on it is a desideratum. We have tried here not only to find new information but also to evaluate the existing facts, and have

made an honest and sincere attempt to the reconstruction of the history of the land on a reasonable foundation.

We claim originality in dealing with the history of Kamrup from the beginning of the thirteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century. So far no one has attempted to arrange and collate the available traditions and legends to produce a historical survey after proper investigation and assessment. We have added a new chapter to the history of Assam on the Chutias, after critically examining the available sources. Our attempt as to the confirmation of the dates mentioned in the *Buranjis*, by means of scientific evidence, has been duly rewarded when we have found the occurrence of an eclipse of the Sun in 1486, mentioned in the *Buranji*, recorded in the register of H. M. Nautical Almanac Office, Royal Greenwich Observatory, Herstmonceux, Sussex. A further completely original contribution is our handling of the history of the Nagas throughout the period under review on the basis of the *Buranjis* and local chronicles. Besides these, we have utilised with profit some valuable materials from periodicals and journals, contributed by many scholars to the history of Assam.

In describing many of the events we have made interpretations and reached conclusions different from those made by eminent scholars of the subject, and as such many of our findings may appear unpalatable, but we have attempted never to deviate from the high ideal of historical truth, and in judging men and things we have tried to place truth above all.

Geography :

Assam is the North-East Frontier of the Indian sub-Continent. Its geographical limit has varied from time to time. In the hands of a powerful ruler its area increased at the cost of the neighbouring territories, while it lost lands on the frontier during the rule of a weak ruler. But from another point of view the boundary of Assam has been permanently fixed by nature to retain its cultural identity. The unity of its history

is the result of its geographical separation from the rest of India.

The Himalayan region of Bhutan and Tibet is the northern boundary of Assam. To the north-east and the east lie the Mishmi Hills, the Patkai Range and Manipur. The Highland of Burma runs parallel with this boundary of the province. The Lushai Hills and the Hill Tippera form its southern boundary while the western boundary-line touches the river Karatoya, according to the indigenous records. The great river Brahmaputra runs through the heart of the province, an extensive tract of territory being on either side. The central districts of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Nowgong, Darrang, Kamrup and Goalpara are watered by the life-giving Brahmaputra, which is the chief artery and highway of Assam. The history and culture of the province are intimately connected with it.

It is possessed of rivers in number and extent equal at least to those of any country in the world of the same size. The valley is inter-sected in its whole length by the great river Brahmaputra, from which it derives its name. The two parts thus divided are called Uttarkul and Dakshinkul or the North and South Bank. These are the geographical divisions of the country and at one time the river divided from each other distinct peoples and independent principalities and jurisdictions, until all were subdued under the powerful Ahoms. As far as natural scenery is concerned, Assam is unrivalled, and perhaps the richest land in the World, "studded with numerous ~~clumps~~ of hills rising abruptly from the general level and surrounded by lofty mountains, and intersected in all possible directions by innumerable streams and rivulets, which, issuing from the bordering mountains, at length empty themselves into the great channel of the Brahmaputra."¹

Land :

The soil of Assam is exceedingly fertile and well adapted

¹ Rabinson, W., Descriptive Account of Assam, Calcutta, 1841, p-4.

to all kinds of agricultural purposes. It is naturally a beautiful tract of country and enjoys all the advantages requisite for rendering it one of the finest under the Sun. Its plains are decked with a rich verdant robe, and washed with the water of numerous streams.

The land in Assam may in general be divided into three great classes according to the level of the water of the Brahmaputra.

The first division consists of the great mountain chains skirting from the north to the south together with their continuations and independent and isolated hills or hillocks. From the north-east to the north-west there are different offshoots of the Himalayas, the Mishmi Hills, the Abor Hills and the hills bordering Bhutan. The Garo Hills, the Khasi Hills and the branches of the Naga Hills stretch through the southern boundary of Assam. There are hills lying in groups, large and small, on the plains of the Brahmaputra Valley, sometimes isolated and sometimes continuations of the northern and southern ranges, the largest group of which is the Mikir Hills, insulated from the southern mountains and covering an area from Sibsagar to Nowgong. The prolongations of the Khasi and Jayantia Ranges touch the Brahmaputra Valley at Gauhati. Other such continuations reach to Boko, Chayagaon and Palasbari as well as from Karaibari to Habraghat in Goalpara. A projection of the northern groups is marked on the north of Baliapara in Darrang. There are also some independent hill ranges in Darrang, Kamrup and Goalpara.

The second division of the lands is the diluvial plain of the Valley, its level being generally above the ordinary inundation of the Brahmaputra or its tributaries. The breadth of this plain varies from place to place, depending to in great measure on the number and the height of the rocks or hills that protect the land from the devastating current of the great river. One of the projecting points is at Bisvanath, above Tejpur, where the rocks rise to a height of about 30 ft. above the maximum flood level of the Brahmaputra. The low hills encircling Tejpur and Singri likewise prevent encroachment of the Brahmaputra upon

the plains of Charduar and its western region. On the south bank the width of the diluvial plain is the greatest immediately east of the Dhansiri, at a distance of 30 miles from the Naga Hills. Owing to the great projection to the north of the Mikir Hills and the absence of rocks on the North Bank, the river takes a northerly course forming a great plain on the south.

The alluvial deposits of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries comprise the third land division of the country. These tracts are very extensive, especially along the channel of the main river, and are of great elevation and fertility. They are subject to annual inundation and as a result are raised high by drift sand and deposits of vegetable matter brought down by the adjacent streams. The most typical of the alluvial plains is the vast land of Kajali in Nowgong, lying between the Brahmaputra and its tributary the Kalang. Another of almost equal extent is the Majuli Island forming the northern border of Sibsagar. Besides these, there are numerous islands of smaller extent throughout the whole course of the Brahmaputra, which are liable to the destructive deviation of the great river. The alluvial tracts on the bank of the Barnadi and the Manas can be classed in this category.

People :

The majority of the people of Assam are of Mongolian stock. A range of sub-Himalayan Hills from the north-east to the north-west is inhabited by the people of Tibeto-Burman origin, the Mishmis, the Abors, the Miris, the Daflas and the Akas. The extreme north-eastern hills are inhabited by the Khamtis and the Singphos while the Patkai Range on the south-east has been permanently the abode of the aboriginal Nagas. Beginning from the extreme south-west the whole area covered by the Garo, the Khasi, the Jayantia, and the various branches of the Naga Hills are inhabited by the peoples of the same names. Further south from the Nagaland dwell the Manipuris.

The most important and numerous of the various Tibeto-Burman races of Assam are the Bodos. These include the Koches, the Meches, the Lalungs, the Dimasas, the Garos, the Rabhas, the Tripuras, the Chutias, the Morans and the Borahis. This stock claims to be the original inhabitants of Assam. Before the rise of the Ahoms, the Bodos controlled the political destiny of Ancient Assam and constituted a synthetic culture over the region bordering the banks of the life-giving Brahmaputra.

In the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Tais or Shans entered Assam through its north-eastern frontier. Among them the Ahoms were the most numerous and powerful and became the ruling clan of Assam for the next six centuries. The other Shan tribes which accompanied them were the Phakials, the Naras, and the Aitonias, most of whom now inhabit the north-eastern extremity of Assam.

Political condition of Assam and its neighbouring states early in the thirteenth century :

(i) *Tibet* : It is mentioned in the Tibetan records that on the death of Song-t-Sen Gampo in 650, the Chinese captured Lhasa. In the reign of Ti-song De-tsen, in the later half of the Eighth century, Tibet became one of the great military powers of Asia. In 763, the Tibetans captured the Chinese capital, Changan. Thus the boundary line of Tibet touched those of the Arabs and Turks across the Pamirs ; Turkestan and Nepal seem to have been subject to her, while the victorious Tibetan armies overran the western part of China. At that time the Tibetans and the Nepalese were in the habit of invading some parts of North-Eastern India adjacent to them. At a later time, the Bhutanese followed them in frequently raiding the frontiers of Bengal and Assam. They would carry off men, women, children and goods, and even a former Raja of Cooch Behar was one of their victims.¹

¹ Bell, C., *Tibet Past and Present*, oxford, 1924. pp. 28-31.

(ii) Burma and the Shan kingdoms :

Tai chronicles record that the Mao kingdom in the seventh century maintained itself with varying degrees of prosperity. By the beginning of the second millennium, there arose a line of very powerful rulers generally known as the Pagan Monarchs in this part of South-East Asia. Anawrahta (1044-77), one of the powerful rulers of this line, gained ascendancy in much of the plain country, which until then were held by the Shans. He extended his sway over greater part of Burma and broke the northern Shan dominion, which had already disintegrated into a number of petty states, and subjugated country as far as Bhamo. Thaton and Pegu were taken and the Talaings and Arakan were reduced to subjection.¹ Anawrahta married a daughter of the Mao Shan King. Their next history is one of progress and prosperity.²

Narapatisithu (1173-1210), the Pagan King, extended his sway over the Shan States from the border of China to Tavoy. Mungoo was included in his empire. He reconstructed the at Martaban.³

In 1210, there was some sort of change in the succession, recorded in the Mong Mao chronicle, by what is called, "a third influx of Kunlung's posterity in the person of Chao-aimo-kam-neng, of the race of Maing-Kaing Maing-Nyaung." There followed two brothers Sao (or Hso) Hkan Hpa and Sam Long Hpa, who extended the limits of the Mao kingdom to the furthest point they ever reached. In 1225, Hso Hkan Hpa succeeded to the throne of the Mao Shans. The suzerainty of Hso Hkan Hpa was acknowledged as far as Moulmein in the south and to

¹ Hall, D. G. E., *A History of South-East Asia*, London, 1955, pp. 124-29.

White, H. T., *Burma*, Cambridge, 1922, pp. 99-100.

William, P. C., *An Outline History of Burma*, St. Peters Institute Press, 1876, Intro. III-VI.

Keng-Hang on the east. His dominions were extended westwards by the overrunning of Arakan, the destruction of its capital and the invasion of Manipur. Assam was subjugated in 1228, and passed under the rule of the Shans, who were henceforth designated as Ahoms in this country. In 1253, Kublai Khan, the Mongol chief, made friendship with the Mao Shans to overthrow the Burman monarchy.¹

Both the Ahom and Burmese chronicles state that the Burmese used to raid Assam and Manipur, after perpetrating horrible cruelties, which are still remembered with a shudder, for they would burn, torture and slay. They brought back slaves, but did not administer any of these countries.²

(iii) China :

By the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Mongols established their power over the major portion of China. The original home of the Mongols was the region on the south-east of Lake Baikal. They are the descendants of the Huns. At the age of 13 years, Genghis or Chingiz, one of the greatest conquerors of the World, succeeded his father as the head of all the Mongols. By 1206, he subjugated the whole of Mongolia, declared himself the ruler of the Mongols and assumed the title 'Khan'. Next he attacked and subdued Hsi Hsi in North China and drove out the Chins. In 1214, he captured Peking. Next he conquered Korea, Khwarazm and the Caspian Sea. He made treaties with Russia and forced tribute from the neighbouring states.³ In 1216, he brought the whole of southern Manchuria under his control. In 1219, leaving to his subordinates the conquest of the Sung Empire, he went westward and in the succeeding years ravaged Central Asia, invaded India

¹ Scott, G., *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Vol. I. Pt. I., p. 197.

² Jesse, T., *The story of Burma*, London, 1946, p. 16.

³ Nourse, A., *A short History of the Chinese*, London, 1938, p-141.

and sent his conquering army across Persia and Asia Minor. He conquered land in Europe up to the Danube and by occupying Novgorod, brought Russia under his subjection. In 1225, Chingiz returned from India and in 1227, he died, leaving to his sons an empire that extended from the China Sea to the Danube and the Volga. Karakoram was their capital.¹

(iv) India west of Assam :

In 1192, on the victory of Muizuddin Muhammad at the battle of Taraori, the Turks and Afghans established their sway over whole of Northern India up to Delhi. Hansi, Samana, Ghram and other Hindu kingdoms were gradually conquered by the Muslims. On the death of Qutb-ud-din Ibak in 1210, Muhammadan supremacy was established from the Punjab in the north to the Narmada river in the south, from Bengal in the east to the border of Sind in the west. Before his death in 1236, Iltutmish added Sind and Malwa to the Muslim empire of Medieval Hindustan.²

In 1202, Ikhtiyar Uddin Bakhtiyar marched from Bihar to Nadiya and dethroned Lakshman Sen, the ruler of Bengal. Then he established Muslim dominion over all the kingdom of Lakhnawati, which at that time was bounded roughly on the north by a north-easterly straight line from the modern town of Purnea through Devkot to the town of Rangpur, on the east and the south-east by the rivers Tista and Karatoya, on the south by the main stream of the Ganges, and on the west by the lower course of the Kosi and from its mouth across the Ganges to the Rajmahal Hill.³ In 1206, Bakhtiyar started his fateful expedition to Tibet through the territory of the Kamrup king. But the expedition proved disastrous to his career and life.⁴

¹ William, E. T., A short History of China, Berkeley, 1928, p-170.

² C. H. I., V. III., p-46.

³ H. B., p. 12.

⁴ T. N., p. 561

(v) *Assam* : It is mentioned in the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* that by the beginning of the thirteenth century, the river Bagmati (which appears to be the modern Karatoya), formed the western boundary of a state of considerable power and extent, under a monarch styled Kamesvar. The eastern boundary of the kingdom then comprised the territory covered by the modern districts of Darrang and Nowgong.¹ On the east of it there was the valley of the Brahmaputra. At that time it was divided into several petty principalities. A line of the Chutia kings was holding the region north of the river Brahmaputra and the east of the Subansiri and the Disang. The tract south and south-east of it was possessed by the several petty Bodo tribes.² Further west there was the kingdom of the Kacharis, stretching south of the Brahmaputra across the Nowgong district. West of the Kacharis and the Chutias, there were the domains of a number of the Bhuyans covering both the banks of the Brahmaputra.³ They were the heads of the different tribes by which the valley was then peopled. Some of them were very ambitious who conquered and absorbed the adjoining communities, and the kingdom thus formed continued to exist until it crumbled owing to the weakness of their successors.⁴ The borders of the kingdoms of the Chutias and the Kacharis were occupied by some of the hill tribes, the Khamtis, the Singphos and the Nagas.

¹ T. N., p. 561

² Dhekial Phukan, H., A. B., p-16.

³ S. A. A., p-60.

⁴ H. A., p-260.

CHAPTER II

SOURCES

Dearth of materials :

The sources for the history of Medieval Assam have not yet been properly cultivated. Though we are in possession of voluminous *Buranjis* on the history of the Ahoms, the materials for the history of the other peoples of the period are as meagre as confused. History and myths, traditions and tales, facts and fictions are curiously inter-mingled to create great obscurity. The legendary accounts with which the beginning of the history of some of the peoples of our period is connected are as varied and conflicting as doubtful in their authenticity. The treatment of the disconnected data in order to construct a genuine framework of political history is a matter of great difficulty, and needs very careful handling.

Though a good number of the *Buranjis* are available for the detailed accounts of the Ahoms, their history has been neglected by most writers. The reason is their under-estimate in assessing the historical value of the *Buranjis*. Moreover, some writers depending much upon the foreign accounts and the superficial reports of outsiders, which narrate the history of Assam from a different point of view, have produced works neither reasonable nor convincing. "The Assamese are justly proud of their national literature. In no department have they been more successful than in a branch of study in which India is, as a rule, curiously deficient.... The chain of historical authenticity can be relied upon. These historical works or *Buranjis* as they are styled in Assam are numerous and voluminous."¹

The sources can be classified in many groups, such as contemporary and post-contemporary, indigenous and foreign, records and finds, original and supplementary, but for our own convenience, these may be put under the following heads : Literary, Archaeological and Foreign Accounts.

¹ Grierson, L. S. I., Vol. I, Pt. I, Intro., p. 156.

Literary Sources :**(i) Earliest Literature :**

The earliest Assamese literature is unwritten and consisted of nursery songs, pastoral ballads sung by cowherds, songs of boatmen, songs describing the twelve months, songs for propitiation of the goddess of small-pox, wedding songs, and many types of folk songs such as *Bihu Nams*, *Ai Nams* and *Dehabicharar Gits*. The mantras or incantations uttered to exorcize ghosts, to cure snake-bites, or perform feats of sorcery, as well as the wise sayings or aphorisms ascribed to the philosopher Dak, belong to this category.

(ii) Ahom and Assamese Buranjis :

The word 'Buranji' is derived from the Ahom language. The literal meaning of it is "a store that teaches the ignorant" (*Bu* 'ignorant persons' *ran* 'teach' and *ji*, 'store' or 'granary'). The use of paper was unknown and the oblong strips of bark of the *Sachi* tree were employed instead. The labour of preparing the bark and of inscribing the writing is considerable. These *Buranjis* are to the Assamese what the *Bakhars* are to the Marathas, the *Twarikhis* to the Mughals and the Persians, the *Yazawins* or *Rajawins* to the Burmese and the *P'ongsawadans* to the Siamese. The older of these *Buranjis* are considered more important than the new ones. These are very carefully preserved, wrapped up in pieces of cloth, and are handed down as heirlooms from generation to generation. Many of them are black with age and the writings have almost disappeared. The subjects dealt with are various but the majority of them are historical in character. Some incorporate the method of divination in use amongst the Ahom *Deodhais* and *Bailungs* (non-Brahmin priests). Others again are religious in nature, while a few contain interesting specimens of popular folklore.

In its unique wealth of historical and quasi-historical manuscripts, Assamese literature appears to be the richest amongst the vernacular literatures of India. There are few families of note in Assam which do not possess a family history of their own. About one hundred and fifty *Buranjis* have so far been discovered.¹ Besides these there are many more in the possession of ancient families. A large number of these *Puthis* and *Buranjis* were destroyed during the Burmese invasion and the Moamaria insurrection, a large number again are annually being destroyed by flood and fire and other natural causes. By far the greatest destruction of these documents must be laid at the door of Kirti Chandra, one of the chief executive officers of the middle of the eighteenth century. He discovered that one amongst them threw doubt on the purity of his descent. With the help of the ruling king, the officer caused all those *Buranjis* to be destroyed which, on examination, were found to record facts reflecting on those in power and their near ancestors.² The number of the *Buranjis* still in existence is considerable, and properly preserved and published must afford valuable materials for an exhaustive and comprehensive history of Assam.

The disrepute into which the Medieval Indian Hindus (with the exception of the Kashmiris) have fallen for their failure to maintain historical records does not apply to the Ahoms. These people were endowed with the historical faculty in a very high degree. When they invaded Assam at the beginning of the thirteenth century, they were already in possession of a written character and a literature of their own. Their priests and leading families possessed *Buranjis* which were periodically brought up to date.³ They have given us a detailed and full

¹ Bhuyan, S. K., *Assamese Historical Literature*, Calcutta, 1929, p-16.

² Barua, B. K., *Studies in Early Assamese Literature*, Nowgong, 1953, pp-68-71.

³ Bhuyan, S. K., *Studies in the Literature of Assam*, Gauhati, 1956, pp-25-26.

account of their rule, from the very beginning of their advent in Assam. The maintenance of family records is common even in an ordinary Assamese family, and it is deemed indispensable on the part of every Assamese to possess a good knowledge of the *Buranjis*. These constitute a glorious and unprecedented chapter in the literature of Assam.

The *Buranjis* were compiled under the orders of the kings and the supervision of the higher Government Officials, who were given free access to all the necessary state papers. These were principally the periodical reports submitted to the court by the Frontier Governors and Military Commanders, diplomatic correspondence sent to and received from foreign rulers and allies, papers submitted to the king's ministers for final orders on revenue and judicial matters, the day-to-day annals of the court which incorporate all the transactions done, important utterances made and significant occurrences reported by eye-witnesses.¹ They are the close embodiment of the descriptions and narratives of the affairs of the royal families and give an exact representation of manners and customs of the people of the time. Many of them produce a vivid picture of the court life of the Ahom rulers, the royal routine, and the every-day relations of the court with outsiders of all kinds. Some of them contain amorous intrigues and courtly romances, idylls of pastoral life, out-bursts of valour and patriotism, critical analysis of complex political situations and epic descriptions of war and triumph.²

The compilation of the *Buranjis* was considered a sacred task, and therefore it was customary to begin it with a salutation to God. There was a group of scribes attached to the secretariat under an officer called *Likhakar Barua* or superintendent of the department of writers.³ The nobles and the chiefs of the

¹ Barua, B. K., *Aspects of Early Assamese Literature*, Gauhati, 1953, pp—133-34.

² Bhuyan, S. K., *Assamese Historical Literature*, Calcutta, 1929, pp-15-16.

³ Bhuyan, S. K., *Studies in Early Assamese Literature*, Gauhati, 1956, pp-68-69.

state themselves, or scribes under their immediate supervision, used to compile the *Buranjis*. They were also compiled by private scholars with the help of other existing chronicles and materials collected by them. A set of apartments was maintained in the Ahom palace to preserve the *Buranjis* along with other records, letters, despatches, and maps, in charge of a high official named *Gandhia Barua*.¹ The chroniclers were generally men of letters who were possessed of comprehensive knowledge on statecraft. Copies of these *Buranjis* were taken by persons who wanted to preserve them in their archives. As a result every family of distinction managed to have a *Buranji* in its own possession.

Foul deeds as well as good ones were equally recorded in all their particulars. Neither the king nor his nobles were spared if they ever had done anything wicked. The knowledge of the *Buranjis* became an indispensable factor in the cultural life of the Assamese people. It formed a part of training given to the princes and the children of the nobles. The *Buranjis* were recited in royal marriages. It was further believed that the future could be ascertained by consulting some of them. All this finally tended to convert the secular *Buranjis* into religious scriptures.²

The earliest *Buranjis* were written in the Ahom language, but, with the conversion of the Ahoms to Hinduism, Assamese succeeded Ahom as the language of the *Buranjis*. The earlier ones written in the old tribal language were akin to other Shan chronicles and their character seem to have derived from the Pali script of Burma. The access to these remote chronicles is now limited to a few old men of the *Deodhai* or priestly class. After the Hinduisation of the Ahoms, the tribal priests gradually fell into disrepute and, though they long resisted the influence

¹ Ibid. p-53.

² Bhuyan, S. K., *Assamese Historical Literature*, Calcutta, 1929, pp. 9-10.

of Brahminism, at last given way by their own conversion to the orthodox Gohains. As a result the Assamese language became the state-language in place of the Ahom.¹

The language of the *Buranjis* is simple, clear and straightforward. Having been composed as the records of concrete facts, they are generally written in a language free from literary limitations. The writers are expert in expressing themselves in short sentences and simple phraseology. Their contribution to the Assamese language is important. A large number of administrative terms and legal expressions are incorporated in them from the Ahom language. Those terms are introduced to denote the things and institutions intimately related with Ahom life and culture. Words of Arabic and Persian origin are also found in the literature of the *Buranjis*, especially in their diplomatic aspects. As to the literary flavour of the *Buranjis*, Bhuyan remarks that "the historical narrative is not dry bone. One notices in it thought and emotion too. Hence it ascends to the level of pure literature. It will not be too much to say that such a confluence of history and literature is not to be found in any modern Indian literature in the pre-British period. What would otherwise be a dry historical narrative, has, in the hands of the writer, become an entertaining historical literature punctuated to the reader's satisfaction by such elements of style as simile, analogy, illustrations, episodes and diversions."²

The date of the compilation of the *Buranjis* has not yet been definitely ascertained. Some scholars are of opinion that these were compiled over a long period, beginning from the late sixteenth to the early nineteenth century.³ But we have already seen that the chronicles of the Ahom kings were maintained from the very early period of their rule in Assam, as is revealed from the command of Sukapha that "the Pundits should unite down all particulars, whenever an incident takes place, when a

¹ Barua, B. K., *Studies in Early Assamese Literature*, Nowgong, 1955, p. 66.

² Kakati, B. K., *Aspects of Early Assamese Literature*, Gauhati, 1953, p-135.

³ *Ibid.* Barua, B. K., *Early Assamese Prose*, p-133.

person dies and when we acquire new followers”¹ Moreover, the Shans and other peoples akin to the Ahoms are known to have been already in possession of historical literature at this time. The political instincts which inspired the Ahoms to record the chief events of the reign in the *Buranjis*, and conferred upon the Assamese the unique distinction of possessing historical masterpieces in prose, can thus be traced from the beginning of the thirteenth century. Some of the *Buranjis* record the events from 568, when the ancestors of the Ahom kings are said to have descended from heaven. The earlier portion of these are generally devoid of historical significance, containing unreliable and unreasonable facts, but from the invasion of Sukapha in the beginning of the thirteenth century, they can be treated as valuable and trustworthy historical records.

The historicity of the *Buranjis* has been proved not only by the way in which they support each other, but also by the confirmation which is afforded by the narratives of Muhammadan writers, wherever these are available for comparison. Their chronology is further supported by other dated records, the coins, copper-plates, rock and temple-inscriptions and inscriptions on cannon. We have ourselves found further confirmation of the correctness of Ahom chronology from the reference to an eclipse of the Sun, hitherto unnoticed, the date of which has received astronomical corroboration.

From the beginning of the rule of Sukapha to the accession of Sukhampha in 1552, there is almost complete agreement in the matter of dates between the printed accounts of Kasinath, Robinson and Gunabhiram and other *Buranjis*. But for the later period up to the end of the Ahom rule, there is lack of conformity between the various *Buranjis*. From the death of Jayadhvaj Singha in 1663, they again agree, but the dates of the intermediate kings, Pratap Singha, Bhaga Raja and Naria Raja, differ by several years in each case. According to Kasinath, from whom Robinson and Gunabhiram appear to have gathered information,

¹ D.A.B., p. 90.

Sukhampha died after a reign of 59 years and was succeeded in 1611 by Pratap Singha, who was followed by Bhaga Raja in 1649, Naria Raja in 1652, and Jayadhvaj Singha in 1654.¹ Other *Buranjis*, on the other hand, agree in ascribing to Sukhampha a reign of 51 years only, and place his death and Pratap Singha's accession in 1603, the accession of Bhaga Raja in 1643, that of Naria Raja in 1646, and that of Jayadhvaj Singha in 1650.² It is more likely that Kasinath made a mistake than that he should have had access to records contrary in contents to the surviving *Buranjis*. Other than this the various historical traditions of Assam contain no serious chronological discrepancies. Again, the *Buranjis* are very accurate in all the dates which can be tested by reference to the Persian sources. The dates of the battles between the Ahoms and the Muhammadans in 1615, 1637 and 1662, confirm the correct dating of the *Buranjis* when they are compared with the Muslim chronicles. Almost all the *Buranjis* give a detailed description of each reign and events are recorded for almost every year of each reign, and the month and day of the month are also regularly noted. If the dates of accession were incorrect, all these dependent dates would also have to be rejected. In case of Sukhampha's reign, we must note that if he did not die until 1611, according to the tradition based on Kasinath, he must have reigned for 59 years, but this seems too long a period for an Ahom king, whose average duration of reign is one-fourth of it. Thus the general tradition of the *Buranjis* appears to be justified in ascribing to him a reign of only 51 years.

Review of the *Buranjis* :

From a thorough review of the available *Buranjis*, it appears that the authors have used almost the same sources. Their literary style, the subject matter dealt with, and the language and the treatment of the subject, show close similarity. Being the summary of the same events, the *Buranjis* are mutually corroborative and supplementary. Inaccuracies and mis-statements are rare except those caused by scribal ignorance or carelessness.

¹ Tamuliphukan, K.N., A.B, pp-24,27,35,37.

² Barua, G.C., A.H.B., pp-95,127,129,142.

(i) *Ahom Buranji* : Among the surviving *Buranjis* written in the Ahom language, we have only one at our disposal, the *Ahom Buranji*. This is edited and translated into English by G. C. Barua, at Calcutta, in 1930. This is a complete *Buranji* of the Ahom kings from the earliest time down to the reign of Purandar Singha (1832–1838). It contains a detailed account of the wars of the Ahoms with the Chutias, the Kacharis, the Koches, the Nagas and other tribes, and presents an exhaustive account of the various Muhammadan invasions and of the troubles caused by the Burmese and the Moamarias. Its dates appear to be accurate. The date of the final compilation of this text must have been in the first half of the nineteenth century, but its author evidently had access to very early materials.

(ii) *Assam Buranji* : In 1829, H. R. Dhekialphukan published his 'Assam Buranji' in Bengali at Calcutta. It is one of the most conclusive and exhaustive accounts of Assam. The dates mentioned in this *Buranji* are not all correct. It is divided into four parts. The first part describes the history of Assam from the remote period to the beginning of the British rule. The second part gives the accounts of the administration, the land tenure, the judicial system and the local and central government of the Ahoms. The third chapter incorporates the geography, land, river, mountain, population, revenue system and the descriptions of the religious places of Assam. The fourth chapter presents a picture of the caste-system, agriculture, religion and the trade and commerce of the country. This work was originally written in Assamese, and translated for publication into Bengali by B. C. Bhattacharyya. The author had some idea of western methods of history, and his *Buranji* differs from those of the traditional type, by virtue of its sections on administration and trade. Dhekialphukan had been a descendant of the old Ahom nobility and his account of the administration of Assam immediately before British occupation is most valuable.

(iii) *Assam Buranji* : In 1844, K. N. Tamuliphukan published an 'Assam Buranji' at Sibsagar, under the patronage of the Ahom king Purandar Singha. It is mainly based on the earlier *Buranjis* and describes the history of the Ahoms from the earliest time to the British occupation of Assam in 1826. It appears

to be sketchy in comparison with the *Ahom Buranji*. Later on this *Buranji* was enlarged by H. K. Barua Sadaramin.¹

(iv) *Chutia Buranji* : In 1850, Robinson found a 'Chutia *Buranji*' in possession of a Chutia and published it in the *Arunodai*, an Assamese magazine. It describes the history of the Chutias from 1189, to the dismemberment of their kingdom in the sixteenth century. The names of the kings are chronologically arranged and the dates are mentioned in the Saka Era.

(v) *Assam Buranji* : In 1876, Gunabhiram Barua published his 'Assam *Buranji*' in Calcutta. It describes the history of Assam from the earliest time to 1875. It is the most detailed and systematic of all the *Buranjis* but some of its dates are found to be incorrect. Besides the political history of all the dynasties of Assam, it gives notices of the castes, language, religion, commerce, agriculture, arts and social customs of the people and the internal government of the province.

(vi) *Assam Buranji* : In 1938, S. K. Dutta published an 'Assam *Buranji*' at Gauhati based on a newly discovered manuscript of the eighteenth century. It differs from the other *Buranjis* in describing only the period 1648-81, and especially the dynastic strife following on Mir Jumla's invasion. In a sense, this is only an account of intrigues and revolutions, chaos and uncertainty. It describes the events of some of the reigns month by month.

(vii) *Purani Assam Buranji* : In 1922, H. C. Goswami edited 'Purani Assam *Buranji*' at Gauhati. This appears to be the earliest of all the *Buranjis* written in the Assamese language. The editor suggests that the work was compiled in the reign of Gadadhar Singha (1681-95). The edition is taken from a single prose manuscript on *Sachi* bark. It supplies a more elaborate account of the reign of the Dihingia Raja, Bura Raja and Chakradhvaj Singha. The account of the reigns of the other kings is meagre. The account of the Muhammadan invasions given in this *Buranji* agrees generally with that contained in the *Ahom Buranji*.

¹ A. B., Calcutta, 1906.

The greatest credit for the publication of the *Buranjis*, goes to Dr. S. K. Bhuyan. The scholar is well known for his various literary activities. His contribution on the history of Assam can hardly be over-estimated. Of his edited *Buranjis*, we have used the following :

(vii) *Kamrupar Buranji* : This *Buranji* was published in 1930, by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam. It is a compilation from several original sources. The language of the *Buranji* is Assamese but a curious admixture of Persian and Hindi words are incorporated in it. It deals with the conflicts of the Mughals with Cooch Behar and Assam, commencing from the visit of the rival Koch princes, Parikshit and Lakshmi Narayan, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, to the court of Emperor Jahangir, soliciting the Emperor's intervention in their claims to the throne. The Muhammadan wars of Assam during the reigns of the Ahom kings, Pratap Singha, Jayadhvaj Singha, Chakradhvaj Singha and Gadadhar Singha are narrated in full, giving prominence to the campaigns of Allah Yar Khan, Satrajit, Mirza Nathan, Mir Jumla, Ram Singha and Mansur Khan. The chronicle ends with the accession of Gadadhar Singha in 1681, and the defeat of the Mughal army under the Nawab Mansur Khan in the battle of Itakhuli in 1682, which saw the termination of long hostilities between the Mughals and the Assamese, though they were revived in a certain extent during the reign of Rudra Singha, who resented the humiliating overtures of Murshid Quli Khan, Governor of Bengal. Three appendices are added giving the history and topography of Kamrup, and her legendary Hindu kings, and the narrative is ended with the invasion of Assam by Mir Jumla.

(ix) *Deodhai Assam Buranji* : Published in 1932, by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies, Assam. It was compiled from a number of old chronicles. These constituent chronicles represent different types of Assamese historical literature. The language of this *Buranji* is pure old Assamese but the influence of original *Ahom Buranji* is seen in the retention of the Ahom nomenclature and the use of the Ahom *Laklis* or years of the *Shan Aijepi* era in place of the *Saka Era*. It describes the Ahom history from the descent of *Khunlung*, and

Khunlai in 568, to the death of Sutyingpha Naria Raja in 1648. The text incorporates narratives from the family Buranjis such as *Bahgaria Buragohair Buranji* and *Datiyalia Buranji*. It also gives the detailed account of the Ahom royal marriages, Ahom royal recreations, burial of the Ahom kings, official function of the Astrologers, origin of the Koch kings, origin of the Jayantia kings, origin of the Chutia kings, origin of the Naras, relation between Nara and Mantara and the history of the Mikirs.

(x) *Asamar Padya Buranji* : This *Buranji* was edited from Duti Ram Hajarika's 'Kali-bharat Buranji' and Bisvesvar Vaidyadhipa's 'Belimarrar Buranji,' in 1932, at Gauhati. The first gives the history of Assam from the accession of Sulikpha or Ratnadhvaj Singha (Lora Raja), in 1679, to the transfer of the territories of the Honourable East India Company to the Crown in 1858 ; and the second from Captain Welsh's expedition to Assam in 1792, to the victory of the Burmese army at Khagarjan (Nowgong) in 1819. Both these books were compiled, directly or indirectly, at the instance of Maharaja Purandar Singha, king of Assam from 1817-18, during the period of Burmese invasion, and feudatory chief of Upper Assam under British protection from 1833-38. It is a metrical chronicle which represents a distinct and numerous branch of Assamese historical literature. It deals elaborately the reigns of the *Tungkhungia* kings and the author continues his account up to the execution of Mani Ram Dewan in 1858. An introductory chapter is devoted to Sulikpha Lora Raja during whose reign the *Tungkhungia* dynasty first attained ascendancy and power.

(xi) *Tungkhungia Buranji* : This *Buranji* was edited from the Assamese chronicle of Srinath Duara Barbarua in 1933, at Calcutta. This is a chronicle of the last dynasty of the Ahom kings, the *Tungkhungias*, which was in power for 145 years from 1681-1826. The dynasty has derived its name from the village Tungkhung or Tingkhang, in Upper Assam where they had their ancestral residence. It describes in detail the events of the reign of Gadadhar Singha, Rudra Singha, Siba Singha, Pramatta Singha, Rajesvar Singha, Lakshmi Singha, Gaurinath Singha, Kamalesvar Singha and Chandra Kanta Singha. It incorporates the account of Gadadhar Singha's recovery of Western Assam which

terminated the long-drawn hostilities between the Ahoms and the Mughals. An exhaustive account of the *Moamaria* insurrection and the Burmese invasion of Assam is also narrated in it.

(xii) *Padshah Buranji* : This was edited at Gauhati in 1935. This presents an unexplored field of materials for the historians of Medieval India. It was compiled in the seventeenth century, when Assam was frequently invaded by the Mughals. Its primary object was to acquaint the Assamese people with the history and manners of the invaders, an intimate knowledge of which was essential to encounter the enemy. It is an anonymous work and the author gathered materials from the reports of reliable witnesses as well as written records. There is only one date mentioned and the chronology is maintained by reference to the reigns of successive rulers.

The language of the book is Assamese, but, unlike other *Buranjis*, there is a large admixture of words of Arabic and Persian origin. The chronicle shows a sound knowledge on the part of its author of the traditions and customs of the Muhammadan world, which suggests that he was either a Muhammadan scholar or a Hindu ambassador who visited Mughal courts in connection with the numerous embassies and diplomatic missions.

The *Buranji* deals with the establishment of the Muhammadan supremacy in India after the defeat of Pithor Raja by Qutbuddin Aibak, called Rungaddin in our chronicle. The conqueror introduces reforms into the system of administration. The army is properly organised on the Mansabdari system. During the reign of his successors Timur invaded the country. The history of Babar, Humayun, Sher Shah and Akbar is properly discussed. The reign of Jahangir and his conquest of Secunderabad are exhaustively recorded. The accounts of the various events of the reign of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb are also duly dealt with. Mir Jumla's marches against Cooch Behar and Assam are clearly mentioned. A chapter is devoted on the Nawabs of Dacca. The careers of three Rajas, Man Singha, Mirza Jaya Singha and Ram Singha of Amber are described in full. Jaya Singha subjugates Eastern India and the Raja of Cooch Behar agrees to pay a tribute of one lakh of rupees to the Delhi Emperor.

(xiii) *Kachari Buranji* : Published in 1936, by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam. This was reproduced from an old manuscript chronicle and deals exclusively with Ahom-Kachari relations from the end of the fourteenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth. The prefatory portion of the chronicle embodies an account of the legendary origin of the Rajas of Cachar, connecting them with the earliest Kachari monarchs recorded in history. The extent and jurisdiction of the Kachari kingdom having changed from age to age, we get glimpses of the earlier settlements of the Kacharis and the different centres of their government till a powerful section of them established a new capital at Dimapur and then at Maibong and Khaspur. The transfer of the capital was due to the pressure upon the Kachari monarchs by their powerful neighbours and rivals—the Ahoms.

(xiv) *Jayantia Buranji* : Published in 1937, by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam. The text has been collated from a number of manuscripts of varying dates. This chronicle especially emphasizes the political relations of the Ahom Government with other states. It gives the account of various political events as well as the social manners and customs of the time. Though meagre it supplies information which is essential to reconstruct the history of the ancient kingdom of Jayantia.

(xv) *Tripura Buranji* : Published in 1938, by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam. This was reproduced from an old manuscript written in 1724, by Ratna Kandali Sarma Kataki and Arjundas Bairagi Kataki, who had visited the court of the Tripura king as agents of king Rudra Singha on three different occasions between the years 1709 and 1715. The chronicle derives its importance principally from the circumstances in which it was compiled, the revelations which it contains of the pan-Indian interests of the Ahom monarch Rudra Singha, and the mass of information which it presents about the history, topography and customs of Tripura.

(xvi) *Assam Buranji* : Published in 1945, by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam. This was reproduced from a manuscript chronicle obtained in 1912.

The title of the Buranji is given in the original manuscript is "Sri Sri Svarga Narayan Deva Maharajar Janma Charitra " which literally means 'an account of the birth of Maharaja Svarga Narayan Deva.' The chronicle is divided into four sections. The first section deals with the origin of the Ahom rulers from the period prior to their advent to Assam, up to the reign of Gadadhar Singha. The second section gives the account of the origin of the several Ahom families of eminence, counsellors and camp-followers of Sukapha. The third section narrates the history of the origin of the rulers of the Naras, Mantaras, Kacharis, Jayantias and Chutias. The fourth section enumerates the hills in Gauhati and its neighbourhood, the list of which was compiled under the order of king Rudra Singha from the *Yogini Tantra*. The relative distances of the sacred hills are also given making their respective names unalterable and fixed for all ages.

(iii) *Assamese Puthis and Vangsavalis :*

Every old Assamese family is in possession of a Vangsavali or genealogical history. This represents the sketches of life and career of the family's ancestors. Thus Vangsavalis supply information which is not found in the Buranjis. Like the Buranjis many of the Vangsavalis have not yet seen the light of day, but still remain buried in family archives. These are the supplementary fragments of regular history, and the future historians of Assam will have to explore them as their materials.¹

Review of the Puthis and Vangsavalis :

(i) *Darrangrajvangsavali :* This was first published by Gait in J. A. S. B. 1893. In 1917, H. C. Goswami edited it in Calcutta from an Assamese Puthi. This narrates the family history of the Darrang Rajas, one of the branches of the Koch kings of Assam, and gives an accurate and comprehensive account of the rise of the Koch power in the west and its gradual expansion in the east and the consolidation of a large and powerful kingdom comprising Western Assam and a large part of North and Eastern

¹ Bhuyan, S.K., *Studies in the Literature of Assam, Gauhati, 1956,* pp. 55-56

Bengal. Apart from the political history of the Koches, it incorporates vigorous descriptions of the victorious expeditions of Sukladhvaj or Chila Rai, and of the construction of the Kamakhya temple on the Nilachal Hill under the order of Nara Narayan, the Koch king. It also narrates at length, how this power was dismembered by the Ahoms on the one hand and the Muhammadans on the other, after the death of Nara Narayan and his worthy brother Chila Rai, and how the royal house was divided into two branches, the eastern and the western. This is the most comprehensive account of the Koch supremacy in Assam.

(ii) *Hara Gauri Bilas* : This Puthi was published by Gait in his Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, in 1897, at Shillong. It was written by Lalit Ram Singha in Assamese in 1265 of the Bengali Era, (A. D. 1856). The book is of purely mythological nature and treats chiefly the marriage of Hara with Gauri. The book contains a passage, which describes that Kamrup comprising Ratnapitha, Bhadrupitha, Saumarapitha and Kamapitha, was given to Durga as her dowry. The author claims to be descended from Narakasur and gives a genealogy of his family.

(iii) *Bhuyar Puthi* : This was published by Gait in 1897 in his Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, at Shillong. This describes the history of the *Bhuyans*, their origin, consolidation and capital at Ratnapur, in Majuli.

(iv) *Adi Charitra* : This was published by M. N. Bhattacharyya, in 1927, at Shillong. It was written by Madhav Dev in A. D. 1664, in metrical Assamese. It is mentioned that from the day the king of Saumara, after defeating the Chutias and the Kacharis, obtained Ratnapur, the country came to be known as 'Asam' and the kings of the race of Indra (Ahoms) were similarly designated.

As well as the *Buranjis*, *Puthis* and *Vangsaavalis* mentioned above, there are many others which have not been published. It is clear that Sir Edward Gait had access to numerous sources which are not available at present, but unfortunately he does not regularly mention them in the course of his history. Thus

his work contains here and there statements which cannot be traced to any of the published texts and for which Gait gives no reference. We have been forced to use this material, but have done so with due caution.

Archaeological :

Coins : Numismatic evidence is one of the most reliable sources for the study of the Medieval History of Assam. There exist coins of the Ahoms, Kacharis, Koches and Jayantias of the period under review which help us much to fix the chronology of the kings of the above kingdoms.

(i) *Ahom coins :* Only one coin of the Ahom kings of our period has so far been discovered. This is a coin of Suklenmung (1539–52), who appears to have first minted coins. It was issued in the year 1544. It is octagonal in shape and the legend is in Ahom language and script. The reading is as follows :

Obverse : Chaopha Suklenmum pin sao lakni plekni, i. e., the great king Suklen reign year 15th year of cycle.

Reverse : Kao bay pha tara heu cu, i. e., I the king offer prayer to Tara.

(ii) *Kachari coins :* There were purchased at Haflong five silver coins issued by the Kachari king, Yasanarayandeva (1583–1610). The legends describe the issuer as the devotee of Hara and Gauri. Two coins of Nara Narayan (1610–...) have also been discovered. These are made of debased silver. The reverse of one of the coins of Yasanarayandeva states the date A. D. 1583. The obverse runs thus : Sri Sri Siva Charanakamala madhukarasya Hara Gauri charanaparayana Hachengsavamsa.

(iii) *Koch coins :*

A few coins of king Nara Narayan have been found in the Garo Hills, which are dated Saka Era 1477 (1555 A. D.) The reading is as follows :

Obverse : Sri Sri mat Naranarayanasya Sake.....

Reverse : Sri Sri Siva charanakamalamadhukarasya.

(of the auspicious Nara Narayana Saka of the bee in the lotus which is the feet of Siva).

Coins of Raghudev :

Raghudev came to the throne of the eastern Koches in A. D. 1583. One of his coins has been discovered which gives the date 1588. So the coin was minted 5 years after his accession. Its reading :

Obverse : Sri Sri Raghudeva Narayana Palasya Saka 1510 (A. D. 1588).

Reverse : Sri Sri Hara Gauri charanakamatamadhukarasya. (of the auspicious Raghudeva Narayan Pala Saka 1510 Of the bee in the lotus, which is the feet of Hara and Gauri).

(iv) *Jyantia Coins :*

Some anonymous coins of the Jayantia kingdom have been found. These must have been issued after the Koch invasion of the kingdom in the middle of the sixteenth century. After defeating the Jayantia ruler, Nara Narayan the Koch king permitted the former to strike coins only in the name of his kingdom. Their reading is as follows :

Obverse : Four lined legend in circle with broad dotted margin : Sri Sri Sri Jayantapura Purandarasya¹ Saka 1630 (A. D. 1708). (Coins of the king of Jayantapura of Saka 1630). There is a horizontal line above the date.

Reverse : Four lined legend in circle with broad dotted margin : Sri Sri Sri Siva charana kamala madhukarasya Saka 1630. (Coin of the king of Jayantapura, a bee on the lotus of the feet of Siva, Saka 1630). Crescent in upper margin ; six pointed star at the end of the legend.

¹ A title of Indra, not proper name of the ruling king.

Epigraphic Sources :

The local epigraphs are one of the means which help to construct a systematic history of Medieval Assam. There are only one Bhuyan and two Koch inscriptions of our period available for study. They record the donation of land, the achievements of the rulers, and facts of historical significance. Their dates confirm the chronology mentioned in the chronicles. Unfortunately we are not in possession of any epigraphic evidence of the Ahom rulers of our period.

1. *Koch Inscriptions* : One of these inscriptions is inside the Kamakhya temple. It runs as follows :

“Glory to the king Malladeva, who by virtue of his mercy, is kind to the people ; who in archery is like Arjuna, and in charity like Dadhichi and Karna ; he is like an ocean of all goodness, and he is versed in many Sastras ; his character is excellent, in beauty he is as bright as Kandarpa ; he is a worshipper of Kamakhya. His younger brother Sukladeva built this temple of bright stone on the Nila Hillock, for the worship of the Goddess Durga, in 1487 Saka (A. D. 1565). His beloved brother Sukladhvaj again, with universal fame, the crown of the greatest heroes, who like the fabulous Kalpatree, gave all that was devoutly asked of him, the chief of all the devotees of the Goddess, constructed this beautiful temple with heaps of stones on the Nila Hill in 1487 Saka.”¹

The other Koch inscription is inside the temple of Hayagriva. It reads thus :

“There was a ruler of the earth named Visva Singha ; his illustrious son, the most wise king Malladeva, was a conqueror of all enemies. In gravity and liberality and for heroism he had a great reputation, and he was purified by religious deeds. After him was born his brother Sukladhvaja who subdued many countries. The son of this Sukladhvaja was king Raghudeva, who was like the greatest man of the Raghu race ; his glories spread out in all directions ; the lord of Kamrupa in obedience

¹ J. A. S. B. 1893, p—295

to the order of destiny, is the slayer of the wicked, and was like water to the flames of the fire of sorrow of the vast populace. Of the seed of Sukladvaja, a king was born of the name of Raghudeva, who consoles innumerable persons, and is a worshipper of the feet of Krishna ; the king coming of age had a temple built on the hillock called Mani Hillock, in Saka 1505 (A. D. 1583). The most skilful and efficient artisan Sridhara himself built it.”¹

(2) *Bhuyan Land-grant :*

Purusottamadasa, a Bhuyan, issued the Rautkuchi land-grant in .A D. 1329, near Vaidyargarh in Kamrup. Its preamble runs thus :

“In the Sandilya Gotra, there was born Vasudeva, who resembled the preceptor of the Gods, who was devoted to the Brahmans, was the ocean of all good qualities and the foremost of noble Sudras. A thousand swordsmen always marched before him and he was the right hand of the king, and his enemies had their residence in heaven. The famous Jayadevasa, who was the lotus of his own race and who possessed the characteristic qualities of the Aryan and was adorned with many noble qualities, derived his being from him. What am I to say about the wealth of his virtue ? From him was born the illustrious Purusottama who on account of his great wealth was matchless and was like the Kalpa-tree on earth. By dint of the valour of his arms and heroism he had defeated the rival kings and obtained the glory of sovereignty. How am I to sing his glory ? He was the path of sound intelligence and the boat of valour ; he was like a boat in the sea of obstruction and the gem decorating the neck of the Goddess Lakshmi and the gem Syamantaka ; to the host of suitors, he was the gem that yields every desired object.”²

¹ J. A. S. B. 1893, pp—295-96.

² S. H. K. Vol. I. p-247

Foreign Accounts :1. *Akbarnamah*—Shaikh Abul Fazl Allami.

This is a Persian text and has been translated into English in the Bibliotheca Indica Series. H. Beveridge has also translated it into English in three volumes, in the History of India, by Elliot and Dowson, London, 1877. We have utilised it in writing the history of the Koches.

2. *Alamgirnamah*—Mirza Muhammad Kazim.

This is a Persian work and has been translated into English in the Bibliotheca Indica Series. We have used it in writing the history of Kamrup. The detailed history of Cooch Behar and the invasion of Assam by Mir Jumla are narrated in it. A part of this book has been translated in the History of India, by Elliot and Dowson, Vol. VII.

3. *Baharistan-i-ghaibi*—Mirza Nathan Alau-d-din Ispahani.

This is a Persian text and has been translated into English by M. I. Borah in 2 Vols. at Gauhati, in 1936. It is very useful for the history of the Koches and the Ahoms of Medieval Assam. This work closely corroborates the Buranjis.

4. *Fathiya-i-Ibrya*—Shihabud-din Talish

This is a Persian text and has been translated into English by Blochmann in J. A. S. B., 1872. Prof. J. N. Sarkar has also translated this work in J. B. O. R. S. Vol. I. 1915. It describes a picture of Assam and its people about the year 1662, and narrates the history of Bengal from Mir Jumla's death to the conquest of Chittagong by Shaista Khan. It also incorporates an account of Koch-Mughal affairs during Shaista Khan's vice-royalty in Bengal.

5. *Padshahnamah*—Abdul Hamid Lahori

This is a Persian text and has been translated into English in the Bibliotheca Indica Series, in two volumes. Blochmann's

analysis in J. A. S. B. 1872, appears to be faulty. Extracts from this work are also to be found in the History of India, by Elliot and Dowson, Vol. VII. We have utilised this work in connection with the history of the Ahom kingdom and Kamatapur.

6. *Riyas-us-Salatin*—Abdus Salam.

This is a Persian text and was written in A. D. 1787-88. It has been translated into English in the Bibliotheca Indica Series. Another translation of it has been incorporated into the History of India by Elliot and Dowson. J. B. O. R. S., Vol VII, 1921, also presents a translation. It narrates the political relations of the Mughal vice-roys of Bengal with the Koches and the Ahoms. It is deficient in dates.

7. *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*—Minhaj-us-Sirai.

This is a Persian text and has been translated into English by Raverty (London, 1881). A translation of this work also appears in the History of India by Elliot and Dowson, Vol. II. This is the most important source for the history and chronology of Medieval Kamrup and its rulers respectively.

8. *Tarikh-i-Feroz Shahi*—Ziaud-din Barani

This is a Persian text and has been translated into English in the Bibliotheca Indica Series, and the History of India by Elliot and Dowson, Vol. III. We have used this source in connection with the history of Kamatapur.

Account of contemporary foreign travellers :

The only foreign traveller to have left an account of any part of our region during the period under consideration was Ralph Fitch who visited Cooch Behar during the reign of Nara Narayan (1540-84). His account has been edited by J. H. Ryley (London, 1899).

CHAPTER III

ADVENT OF THE AHOMS

Origin of the Ahoms :

The origin of the Ahoms is confused, just as is that of the other remote tribes of India. But the majority of scholars are of the opinion that they are the descendants of the Shans or Tais of South-East Asia:

Prof. D. G. E. Hall says that the Shans, the Laos and the Siamese of to-day are all descended from a racial group, cognate to the Chinese and known among themselves as the Tai. From the sixth century B. C. onwards, Chinese records make frequent reference to these 'Barbarians' on the south of the Yang-tse-king. Early in the Christian Era, the Tai came under Chinese suzerainty, but were often in rebellion and ever anxious to assert their independence. In the middle of the seventh century A. D., they formed the powerful kingdom of Nanchao, which exerted a far from inconsiderable influence upon the course of Burmese history before the rise of the Pagan. Tai tribes also found their way into South-Eastern China on the one side and the Northern Shan States of Burma on the other. In 1229, Tai immigrants founded the Ahom kingdom of Assam on the Brahmaputra Valley.¹

Sir Edward Gait is of opinion that early in the thirteenth century, a group of hardy hillmen wandered into the Eastern Extremity of the Brahmaputra Valley, led by chance rather than by any deep-seated design, and quite unconscious of the fact that their descendants were destined to bring the whole valley under their rule and to set a limit to the eastward extension of the empire of the Mughals. They were the progenitors of the Ahoms. They were an offshoot of the great Tai or Shan race, which spreads eastwards, from the border of Assam over nearly the whole of Further India and far into the interior of China. Shans proper, occupied the northern and eastern hill tracts of Upper Burma and Western Yunnan, where they formed a group of states.

¹ Hall, D. G. E., *Burma*, London, 1950, p-28.

The paramount kingdom, the home of the Mau branch of the tribe, was known to themselves as Mung Mau and as Pong to the Manipuris. Sometimes the latter term denotes the entire country or collection of states.¹

Dr. S. K. Chatterjee says that the advent of the Ahoms in India formed a part of the general movement of Dai or Thai people from South China, which appears to have been going on during the second half of the First millennium A.D., in South-East Asia, and led ultimately to the settlement of the Loas in Indo-China (Vietnam). The Thai proper or the Siamese first visited Northern Siam and gradually spread all over Siam, and the Shans settled in Northern Burma. From the Shan lands in North Burma, these hardy Sino-Tibetan hillmen, speaking what may be described as a form of Siamese and first cousins to the Bodos and other Tibeto-Burmans already established in Assam and India, following the course of the Luhit and the eastern tributaries of the Brahmaputra, after crossing the Patkai Range found themselves at the extreme east of the Brahmaputra Valley. The first Shan or Thai invaders consisted of nine thousand men, women and children. So, it is generally surmised that the bulk were adult males who had to provide themselves with wives from among the local Bodo tribes. Thus the process of miscegenation among two branches of the great *Kirata* people started.²

Dr. S. K. Bhuyan states that the Ahoms are the members of the Shan branch of the great Tai or Thai family extends from the gulf of Siam northwards into Yunnan and thence westwards to Assam, and it comprises several divisions, the Siamese, Loas, Shans, Tai-mow or Taikhi (Chinese Shans), Khamti and Ahom. The prestige associated with the name Tai or Thai, literally, of celestial origin, is seen in the Ahoms still designating themselves by that name though most of them have been converted to Hinduism, and the recent attempt to rename the Siamese kingdom as Thailand.³

¹ H. A., p-70.

² Chatterjee, S. K., *The place of Assam in the History of India*, Gauhati, 1955, p-40.

³ Bhuyan, S. K. *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Gauhati, 1949, p-2.

The traditions of the Ahoms regarding the origin of their kings tally very closely with those preserved by the Shans of Upper Burma. But there are also some differences in matters of detail and especially in the names of the various rulers and of the places where they reigned.¹ A more noteworthy note of divergence is that the Shan chronicles contain no reference to Sukapha's invasion of Assam. They claim that Samlungpha, the brother of a king of Mung Mau, who ascended the throne in 1220, gained several notable victories in Upper Assam, where he defeated the Chutias, as well as in Arakan, Manipur and other countries. The actual fact seems to be that while Sukapha was pushing his way across the Patkai, with a small body of colonists, rather than of military invaders, and establishing himself in the south-eastern corner of the Brahmaputra Valley, the general of another Shan tribe may have entered the valley by a more easterly route and inflicted a series of defeats on the Mishmis, Khamtis and Sighphos of the north of tract where the Ahoms made their first lodgement and returned home, invading Manipur and Arakan on the way.

Outline of Ahom History :

We commence our study of the early Ahom kingdom with a brief summary of Ahom history from the first invasion to the occupation of Assam by the British.

It has already been noticed that Ahoms were an offshoot of the great Tai or Shan race, which spreads from the border of Assam to the whole of Further India, up to the interior of China. The particular section to which they belonged, or the Shans proper, inhabited the northern and eastern hill tracts of Upper Burma and Western Yunnan, where they formed a group of states. In the early part of the thirteenth century, these Sino-Tibetan hillmen followed the course of the Luhit and the eastern tributaries of the Brahmaputra and reached to its valley after crossing the Patkai. They first fought with the indigenous peoples of the

¹ At the suggestion of Prof. Hall, I wrote to Prof. Pe M Lung Tin of Rangoon University, requesting him to supply me with necessary information on this point, but unfortunately I have not received any response.

region, who were divided into petty principalities, and were not in a position to resist the advent of the powerful invaders. From the thirteenth to the fifteenth century the Ahoms were mainly busy in consolidating their power. Sections of the Nagas and the Kacharis were brought under Ahom domination, as well as some tribes of the Tai race who had settled in Assam long before Sukapha's invasion. But real expansion began from the sixteenth century, when the Ahom king Suhummung, the Dihingia Raja annexed the kingdom of the Chutias centering round their capital Sadiya. The same king drove the Kacharis from their stronghold at Dimapur. The Bhuyan Chieftains, who had been ruling in the north bank of the Brahmaputra, were brought under Ahom control. The history of the seventeenth century was mainly one of the Ahom-Mughal conflicts which arose out of the ambitions of the Mughals to extend their territories further to the east, the intervention of the Ahoms in the affairs of the rival princes of Cooch-Bihar, and the violation by the Ahoms of the terms of the treaties entered into by them with the Mughals. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, king Rudra Singha, a man of great ability and ambition, having brought the neighbouring territories under his domination, turned his attention towards organising a confederacy of the Rajas of Hindustan with a view to oust the Mughals. After this king the history of the Ahoms is one of internal strifes and dissensions, downfall and disintegration. In 1817, the Burmese invaded the country and, in 1822, achieved the complete domination of Assam. But in 1824, the British entered Assam and expelled the Burmese from their commanding position up the river Brahmaputra. By the treaty of Yandabu, enacted in 1826, Assam passed into the hands of the East India Company. Thus the Ahoms ruled in Assam for about six hundred years.

The name Assam :

The Ahom rulers played an important role in the history of Medieval India, and once attained a very high imperial position. They were designated as 'Svargadeos' meaning kings from heaven. In their palmy days, the boundary of their realm embraced the whole of the North-East of the Indian sub-Continent from the sources of the Brahmaputra to the river Karatoya and from the bottom of the Himalayas to the Hills of Surma

and Subansiri Valley. They were so powerful that the kingdom they carved out for themselves came to be associated with their name as a nation. The word 'Assam' or 'Ahom' has been a bone of contention to the scholars in the field.

Robinson contends that the name Assam is generally supposed to be derived from the Sanskrit term 'asama,' a compound word formed from the negative particle 'a' and 'sama' (equal), signifying 'unequaled' or 'unrivalled' ; he further says that this derivation was merely an invention of the Brahmins after the conversion of the Ahoms into the Brahminical faith. These Ahoms were a tribe of the Shans, who invaded the country, and from whom it might in greater probability have derived its present appellation.¹

E. Gait suggests that 'Asam' is a Sanskrit derivative which these Mongolian tribes would not have been acquainted with and the suggested etymology has hitherto been rejected. The Ahoms called themselves Tai, which means 'glorious,' and of this 'Asama' is a fair Assamese equivalent, just as is Svargadeo (king of heaven) of Chaopha, and Gohain (chief) of Chao. The softening of the s to h, from Asam to Ahom, has its counterpart in the change from Gosain to Gohain. From the people, the name was subsequently applied to the country.²

B. K. Kakati says that Asama (peerless), may be a later Sanskritisation of some earlier form like Acham. In Tai, Veham means 'to be defeated.' With the Assamese prefix a, the formation Asam would mean 'undefeated' 'conquerors.' The word Asam was first applied to the Shans and subsequently to the country they conquered.³

S. K. Chatterjee suggests that the affiliation of the name Ahom-Asam to the tribal name of the Ahoms themselves has been adopted by the Burmese. When the Burmese met the

¹ Robinson, W., A Descriptive Account of Assam. Calcutta 1841, p-2.

² H. A., p. 246.

³ Kakati, B. K., Assamese, its formation and development, Gauhati, 1941. pp-1-3.

Shan people, they noted their name and wrote it down in the Mau script as 'Rhwam.' Owing to certain characteristic developments of Burmese phonology, the word has now come to be pronounced in modern Burmese as Shan. The name Ahom appears to be connected as a tribal name with this 'Rhwam' and a case of early dropping of the initial r in Ahom mouths, or its modification to a, to give the form Ahom. As a foreign tribal name, Ahom was not properly understood by old Assamese speaking Hindus and tribal peoples when the Ahom conquerors came into Eastern Assam. The name Ahom was then corrected to its original Sanskrit form, A-samā and this gave the word Asam-Assam as the name of the country which the Ahoms conquered and in which they established themselves.¹

The tradition of the Ahoms themselves is that the present name is derived from 'Asama' in the sense unequalled or peerless. The term was applied to them at the time of their invasion of the valley, by the local tribes in token of their admiration of the way in which the Ahom king first conquered and then conciliated them.²

The Muslim chroniclers wrote 'Asham,' and in early period of the British Rule, it was spelt with only one 'S'. Some are of the opinion that the word is derived from Asama, in the sense 'uneven' as distinguished from Samatata, or the level plains of East Bengal.³ This does not appear correct. The word 'Ahom' nowhere occurs prior to the Ahom occupation, and in the 'Vangsavali' of the Koches, it is applied to the Ahoms rather than to their country.⁴ The word is, no doubt, derived from the present designation of the Ahoms.

¹ Chatterjee, S. K., *The place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India*, Gauhati, 1955. pp-42-43.

² Tamuli Phukan, K. N., A. B., Calcutta, 1906, p-11.

³ H. A., p-245.

⁴ D. R. V., pp-40-41.

The capitals of the Ahoms :

The first capital of the Ahom rulers in Assam was built at Charaideo, in middle of the thirteenth century, by the founder king Sukapha. In later time the capital was transferred from Charaideo to Garhgaon by Suklenmung or Garhgaya Raja (1539-52). The city of Garhgaon had four gates of stone and mud. It was circular and wide, and composed of many villages. A high state of order and refinement prevailed there.¹ The ruins of this famous city is still in existence.

The contribution of the Ahoms to Indian life :

The Ahoms unified Assam. They fought the Muslim invaders, and after varying fortunes in war, they finally drove them out of their territory in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. They were very practical in the art of war. They learnt from the Muhammadans the use of firearms during the early part of the sixteenth century, and themselves soon became expert in the manufacture of cannon, guns and matchlocks. These rulers stopped the Muslim flood from penetrating into Burma, Siam and Indo-China. The Arabs and later on the Indian Muslim merchants from Western India, found a direct line of access by sea to Malaya and Indonesia, but a land-route for aggressive advance was denied to them through North-Eastern India by the Ahoms. Otherwise, the history of Burma and Siam and Indo-China might have been different.

The Ahoms had a sense of history. It is remarkable how this sense characterised the Kirata peoples more than the Arvo-Dravido-Austriac Hindus of other parts of India. They made history writing quite a distinctive feature of Assamese culture, in both the Ahom and Assamese languages. The result was the development in Assamese of a terse and vigorous prose style for writing history, quite different from the flowery and picturesque literary styles of the rest of India.²

¹ Fathiya-i-Ibriya, J. B. O. R. S., 1915, p-193.

² Chatterjee, S. K., The place of Assam into the History and Civilisation of India, Gauhati, 1955, p-46.

The valuable contribution of the Ahoms to the culture of North-Eastern India is due to their racial admixture with the indigenous population of the soil. The majority of the followers of Sukapha were adult males. They had left their women-folk in their Shan homeland as being incapable of the strenuous life of adventures, and were therefore compelled to marry from among the women of the conquered, the Morans, the Borahis and the Chutias. Speaking of the relations of the Ahoms with these tribes, Atan Buragohain, Prime Minister of Assam (1662-79), said, "Sukapha had greater regard for the abilities and personal qualities of the Chutias, Borahis and Morans, whom he met at different places, than towards his own followers. Since that time, there was an admixture of blood and children were of mixed origin as the Ahoms had not brought their wives when they first came from Nara, and as they accepted wives only when they came here."¹

Location of geographical names mentioned in this work, in connection with the advent of the Ahoms :

Maulung:—It is mentioned in the Ahom Buranji that Sukapha, a Shan prince of Maulung, founded the Ahom rule in Assam. It is clear from the same chronicle that this Maulung was somewhere in the present Upper Burma or the Yunnan province of China.² In our present state of knowledge, it is difficult to identify exactly the above kingdom. (The word 'Mong' in the Shan vocabulary signifies city or country). There are many places with names similar to Maulung. The following are among the most important:—

Mengleng:—On the route from Kunlong to Ssu-mao, 100° 15' E. 23° 15' N.³

Menglang:—On the route between Yunchou and Talifu, 100° 15' E. 24° 15' N.⁴

¹ D. A. B., p-91.

² A. H. B. pp. 42-43.

³ Davies H. R., *Yun-nan- The Link between India and the Yangtze* Cambridge, 1909, pp. 93-94

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 144.

Menglung:—On the route between Myitkyina and Yeng Yuch,
97° 45' E. 24° 45' N.¹

Muong-le:—101° E. 22° 35' N.²

Manglun:—A village of the southern Shan state of Kengtung
in the district of Mong He.³

Manglon:—One of the northern Shan states extending from
21° 31' to 23° N. 100 miles along the Salween.⁴

Monglang:—A district of the southern Shan state of Kengtung,
100° 30' E. 21° 30' N.⁵

Monglin:—An important district and town of the southern
Shan state of Kengtung.⁶

Monglang:—This Monglang is different from that above men-
tioned. A circle in the northern Shan state of Hsi Paw, in
the eastern subdivision.⁷

Monleng:—A circle of the Mong Pu district of the southern
Shan state of Kengtung.⁸

Monglong:—Chief town and capital of the state of the same
name. A sub-state of the state of Hsi Paw.⁹

Monglong :—This is in Laos, 101° 45' E., 20° 55' N.¹⁰

In this connection the traditional history of the Shan king-
doms of Mung Mau and Momiet may be helpful.

Shortly after their descent to earth, kun-Lung and Kun-Lai,
the ancestors of the Shan people, quarrelled on the subject of

¹ Ibid. p. 189.

² D' Orleans P. H. From Tonkin to India, London, 1892, pp. 73-75

³ G. U. B. S. S. P. II V. 11. p.177.

⁴ Ibid. p. 165.

⁵ Ibid. p. 384.

⁶ Ibid. p. 385.

⁷ G. U. B. S. S. p. 384

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid. pp-388 & 394.

¹⁰ Davies H. R. Yun-nan--The Link between India and the Yangtze,
Cambridge, 1909, p-391.

precedence, and the former determined to abandon his claim to the kingdom in the Shweli Valley and to found a new one for himself. Kun-Lung crossed the Irrawadi and shortly afterwards arrived at a place near the Uru, a tributary of the Kyendwin, where he established himself and founded a city called Maing-Kaing Maing-Nyaung. The actual position of this city is difficult to locate exactly. There is said to be a modern town of Maing Nyaung on a small left tributary of the Kyendwin below the Uru, but above the town of Kendat, and another called Maing-Kaing on the left bank of the Uru. The whole district is perhaps meant. He was succeeded by his son, Kun-Su, who ruled at modern Mung-Nyaung on or near the Uru. He reigned here for twenty five years (A. D. 608-633). He was succeeded by his son Chau-Sen-Sau (633-652), who was followed by his son Chau-Kun-Jan (652-667) and he in turn by his son Chau-Kun-Jun (667-78). In the reign of the last mentioned king, his son Kham-pong-pha went to reside at Mung-Ri-Mung Ram, and afterwards reigned there as king of Mung Mau.

Thus Kun-Lung and his posterity reigned at Maing-Kaing Maing-Nyaung for one hundred and ten years, and meanwhile Kun-Lai had founded a capital called Mung-Ri-Mung-Ram at a short distance from the left bank of the Shweli, and supposed to be some eight or nine miles to the eastward of the present city of Mung Mau. Here he reigned for seventy years, and was succeeded by his son Ai-dyep-that-pha, who ruled for forty years, but who died without issue in 678 A. D. Kham-pong pha, the son of Chau-Kun-Jun mentioned above, was then created king, and in his person Kun-Lung's line became supreme among the Mau. The length of his reign is not known, but he was followed by his son, during whose rule the capital Mung Ri Mung Ram declined, and became of secondary importance to the town of Ma-Kau Mung-Lung, which was situated on the right bank of the river and believed to be some six or seven miles west of the capital. This was succeeded by his younger brother, Kam-Sip-Pha, who ascended the throne in 703 A. D. and established his court at Ma Kau Mung-Lung, thus finally abandoning Mung Ri Mung Ram.

During the next three hundred and thirty two years Kam-Sip-Pha and his descendants appear to have reigned in regular

succession. The succession, however, was broken at the death of Chau-Lip-Pha in 1035, and a relation of the race of Taipong of Yun-Lung was placed on the throne in that year. He was called Kun-Kwot-Pha and signalled the change in the succession by establishing a new capital, called Cheila, on the left bank of the Shweli and immediately opposite to Ma Kau Mung-Lung. He is said to have incorporated Bhamo in his dominions.¹

At this period the dominant power in all these regions was that of the king of New Pagan, Anawratha (1044-1077). He is said to have extended his sway over the greater part of Burma. In the north, he broke the Shan dominion, which had already disintegrated into many independent states, and subjugated the country as far as Bhamo, while the more remote Shan states, such as Mogaung and Mo-hsiyin, retained their independence. Thatou and Pegu were taken and the Talaings reduced to subjection. Arakan, which had been invaded, had held by the Shans for a few years and ultimately became tributary. The history of Pagan for the next two centuries was one of flourishing progress.² In the history of Mung-Mau, it is recorded that Kun-Kwot-Pha's son and successor gave his daughter in marriage to the Pagan monarch, thus almost implying that he acknowledged him as liege lord. By the beginning of the thirteenth century, Pam-Yau-Pung became the king of the Mau kingdom. Before his death in 1210, his younger brother established a new kingdom in the neighbouring state of Momiet. Pam-Yau-Pung was succeeded by Chan-Ai-Mo-Kam-Neng, of the race of Kun-Su of Maing-Kaing Maing-Nyaung, who ruled for ten years and had two sons Chau-Kam-Pha and Sam-Lung-Pha, the latter perhaps the most remarkable personage in the Mau history. The first succeeded to the throne of Mung Mau at the death of his father in 1220 A. D., but Sam-Lung-Pha had already, five years previously, become Tsaubwa (ruler) of Mung-Kaung or Mogaung, where he had established a city on the banks of the Nam Kaung and had laid the foundation of a new line of tsaubwas. He appears to have been essentially a soldier and to have undertaken a series of campaigns under his brother's direction

¹ H. S. pp. 14-15

² White, H. T., *Burma*, Cambridge, 1922, pp. 99-100

or perhaps as Commander-in-chief of his army. The first of these campaigns began by an expedition by which he conquered Maing ti (Nan-tien), Momien and Wan chang (Yung Chang) and from thence he extended his operations towards the south, Kaingma, Maing-Maing, Kiang-Hung, Kaing-Tung, and other smaller states each in turn falling under the Mau yoke. He made a second expedition to the west, and on this occasion crossed the Kyendwin river and overran a great portion of Arakan. A third expedition was then undertaken to Manipur with similar success and again a fourth to Upper Assam, where he conquered the greater portion of the territory then under the sway of the Chutia or Sutya kings.¹

Momiet included the whole of the country between the left bank of the Irrawaddy and Kusambi, or the provinces of Mung-Mau proper, as far north as the territory of the Khamti Shans. It is said that at a time Momiet comprised seven maings (provinces), viz., Bhamo, Molai (south-east of Bhamo, and probably near Ma-Kau Mung-Lung, the earlier capital of Mau kings), Maing-Lung, Ungbawing, Thibo, Thunqzei, Singu and Tagaung.

The first tsaubwa of the Mau line was called Fu-Sang-Kang, the younger brother of the Mau king, Pam-Yau-Pung. His reign is believed to have commenced about the same time as that of his brother (1210). Fu-Sang-Kang had three sons, the elder named Chau-Kang-Pha, the second Chau-Zot-Pha, and the third Chau-Ka-Pha; the second of these was created by his father (during his life-time) tsaubwa of Thibo and the first, tsaubwa of Taipong, the southern maing, or district of Theinni. The youngest, Chau-Ka-Pha, succeeded his father at Momiet in 1209 A. D. He reigned here for eighteen years, but then after a quarrel with his elder brother, Chau-Kang-Pha of Taipong, abdicated and retired to Mogaung at the time of Sam-Lung-Pha's conquest of Assam and, in 1229, he proceeded to the upper portion of Assam and became its first tsaubwa, establishing his capital at Hologurri.²

¹ H. S. pp. 17-18.

² H. S. p. 50.

From the history of the above two kingdoms, we can determine the geographical position of Maulung or Mung Lung, the land of Sukapha's origin, mentioned in the Buranjis. Kunlai is said to have founded his capital at Mung-Ri Mung-Ram, at a short distance from the left bank of the Shweli, and supposed to be some eight or nine miles to the east of the present city of Mung Mau. We know that the latitude and longitude of this city are 24° and $97^{\circ} 50''$ respectively. ¹ Subsequently the capital Mung-Ri Mung-Ram declined and Kam-Sip-Pha, a king of the Mau line, who ascended the throne in 703 A. D. established his court at Ma-Kau Mung-Lung, which was situated on the right bank of the river and believed to be some six or seven miles west of the capital. From the geographical position of present Mung-Kun,² we can know the position of Ma-Kau Mung-Lung. Let us now consider whether this Ma-Kau Mung-Lung can be identified with Maulung of the Buranjis.

We know that Anawratha, the king of Pagan who ruled from 1044-1077, extended his sway over the greater part of Burma. In the north, he broke the Shan dominion, which had already disintegrated into many small independent states and subjugated the country as far as Bhamo. Therefore, at this time, Ma-Kau-Mung-Lung was incorporated into the dominion of the Pagan king. Again Mau history tells us that king Kun-Kwot-Pha who ruled after 1035, established his capital at Cheila, on the left bank of the Shweli. So evidently by this time Ma-Kau Mung-Lung was lost to the Mau kingdom. We also know from the history of Burma that up to the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Pagan rulers were very powerful and maintained their sway over some portion of the northern Shan kingdom. In 1220, the Mau King Chau-Kwam-Pha became the king of Mung Mau and in 1215, his younger brother Sam-Lung-Pha became the tsaubwa of Mogaung on the north. Sam-Lung-Pha is said to have undertaken an expedition towards the east and south as the Commander-in-chief of his brother, perhaps

¹ H. R. Davies, *Map of Yunnan in the Link between India and Yangtze*, Cambridge, 1909.

² H. J. Couchman, *The map of India and the adjacent countries*, Calcutta, 1834.

to the Mau territories already captured by the Pagan kings. So, by the beginning of the thirteenth century, Ma-Kau Mung-Lung was not under the suzerainty of the Mau rulers.

Let us now consider the history of Momiet. It is said that at times Momiet was a state of some significance, and included the whole of the country between the left bank of the Irrawady and Kusambi, or the provinces of Mung-Mau proper, as far north as the territory of the Khamti Shans, and comprising consequently the tsaubwship of Bhamo. The kingdom comprised seven maings, or provinces, viz., Bhamo, Molai (south east of Bhamo and probably near the present Nam-Kam), Maing-Lung, Ungbannng, Thibo, Thangzei, Singu and Tagaung.¹

The first tsaubwa of Momiet of the Mau line was Fu-Sang-Kang, the younger brother of the Mau king, Pam-Yau-Pung. He is said to have ruled about the same time as his brother, who ruled from 1203-1210. He had three sons of whom the youngest, Chau-Ka-pha, is said to have succeeded his father at Momiet in 1209. We have already seen that Momiet comprised a province called Maing-Lung, but no authority mentions where it was situated in the kingdom. But from a critical study of the above, it may not be difficult to find out the actual geographical position of Maing-Lung.

The south-east portion of present Bhamo with which Maing-Lung of Momiet might be identified has in the meantime changed its name. In the kingdom of Momiet, it was called Molai. Therefore, Maing-Lung must be somewhere in the other part of the kingdom of Momiet. In the last century the state of Momiet included ruby mines and the lands of tea-cultivation, and comprised the territory of the Khamti Shans. Moreover, by the beginning of the thirteenth century, Sam-Lung-Pha was ruling powerfully from present Mogaung and his brother Chau-Kwam-Pha to the territories east of him. As none of these districts were ruled by Fu-Sang-Kang at the time, it is certain that Maulung could not have been within their borders. So, we can conclude that in the beginning of the thirteenth century, Fu-Sang-Kang,

¹ H. S. p-19.

father of Chau-Ka-Pha, was ruling in a small state near the territory of the Khamti Shans, near the North Eastern Border of Assam, under the suzerainty of the Mau dominion, and Chau-Ka-Pha succeeded to this state at the death of his father in 1209 A.D. In the map of Eastern Asia by J.B. Tassin and North-Eastern Frontier, of Bengal, by the Surveyor General of India, a place named Moang Lang is mentioned on the bank of Nam Kiu river; though no sources give us information about its history, Sir Edward Gait has taken this place as Maulung, the state of origin of Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom kingdom in Assam.¹ But he has given no history of the place nor any reason in support of this identification of Moonglang or Maulung. Though Gait gives no argument for his identification, it is evident that Maulung lay somewhere in this region. In the present circumstances, unless further sources are forthcoming to disprove our theory, we cannot but take the south-eastern border of the region of the Khamti Shans as Maulung or Moong Lang, the land of the origin of Sukapha the Great. In this case we must assume that Sukhangpha or Sukranpha, the brother of Sukapha according to the Assam chronicles, was identical with Chau-Kang-Pha or Chau-Kwam-Pha, of the Shan tradition. The genealogy of Sukapha as given in the Assamese sources differs considerably from that of the Shan Chiefs who were ancestors of Chau-Kang-Pha, but several names are similar and it is possible that the Assamese genealogy and the Shan look back to a common source.*

Mongkung:—(Burmese Maing-Kaing)—A state in the eastern division of the southern Shan states, lying approximately between 21° 15' and 22° north latitude and 97° 15', and 97° 50' east longitude, with an area of 1,642.75 sq. miles. It is bounded on the north by Hsi Paw; on the east by Mong Tung Kehsi Mansam and Mong Nawng; on the south by Lai Kha; and on the west by Lawk Sawk.²

¹. Map, H. A. (Last Page).

See Appendix B.

². G. U. B. S. S. Pt. II, Vol. II, p. 378.

In the case of Mungkong or Mungkang of the Ahom Buranji¹ the same difficulty arises as in the case of Maulung. In Upper Burma and Western Yunnan, the place names are frequently changed. Moreover there are many places of the same name. So it is difficult to locate exactly the Mungkang of the Buranji. Here in this connection, the discussion of the history of Mogaung may be of some help to our conclusion.

The most important province or section of the Mau kingdom under the central state of Mung-Mau was that known at the present day as Mogaung 97°E and 25°15' N. In the legend of Kun-Lung we saw that the western portion of the province was said to have been occupied by him in the earliest days of Mau history and it was occasionally mentioned as the country of Nara. This Nara country, until conquered by Sam-Lung-Pha, together with parts of Khamti formed an entirely independent Nara state. The Naras were a comparatively civilized people, and the few who remain are still regarded in Mogaung, Khamti and Upper Assam as a learned class and are generally employed among the Buddhist priesthood and others as astronomers and writers. Their original home was probably in Khamti, though in former times that province extended far beyond its present limits towards the south and west. They were a valley-dwelling agricultural people and superior in point of civilization to the hill tribes by whom they were surrounded. Their independence seems to have continued down to about the reign of the Mau King, Chau-Kam-Pha, when the General, Sam-Lung Pha, prior to his extensive conquests, appears to have been created first tsaubwa or chief ruler of the greater part of their country, under the suzerainty of his brother. The precise date of Sam-Lung-Pha's accession in the Nara country is somewhat uncertain, but 577 of the Burmese era or 1215 A.D., is the year generally indicated in the Shan records. At this time it is related that Sam-Lung-Pha, in crossing the river now known as the Nam Kaung (Mogaung), a short distance above the site of the present Mogaung, found a sapphire drum in the bed of the

¹ A. H. B., p. 45.

stream, and, regarding it as a good omen, at once established a town near the spot, and called it Mung-Kaung or "drum town".¹

If the above Mung-Kaung² is identical with the Mungkaung of the Buranji, then it must be somewhere near the present city of Mogaung. (97°E, 25°15' N).

Namken River:—In identifying the Namkiur river of the Deodhai Assam Buranji³ we also find the same difficulty. There are so many rivers in Burma and Yunnan, some of which are called Namkaw, Namkion, Namkung, Namkyeng Namkai and Namkawng. Let us consider some of them.

The **Namkaw** rises under Loi Me Nam, on its western face, and runs northwards until it flows into the Nam lai. It is crossed on the road from Hsi law to Mong Long town at Kang Kang, and is there about twelve yards broad and one foot deep in the dry season.⁴

Namkion River:—It is in the region between Khamti tract and India. This river was also called Meli-remai of the Kioutsés, the western branch of the Irrawadi. It was about 160 yards in width and 12 feet deep. The water is clear and sluggish. The latitude and longitude of its point of origin are 27° and 97° 30' respectively.⁵

Namkung :—A stream in the southern Shan state which rises to the north-west of Keng Hkam and flows eastward into the Manloi, a tributary of the Nam Pang near Hsai Hkao. It has a course of about thirty miles.⁶

¹ H. S., pp. 39-40.

² (1) Map of Eastern Asia comprising China, Bootan, Assam, Burma and East Bengal etc., by J. B. Tassin, Calcutta, 1940.

(2) North-Eastern Frontier, Bengal, including Sikkim, Bhootan, Assam etc. by Surveyor General of India, Calcutta, 1865.

(3) Map of Countries 21° and 30° and 90° 30' and 99° , showing the sources of the Irrawadi river and eastern branches of the Brahmaputra.

(4) India and the Adjacent Countries, Assam, Burma and Yunnan (China). Survey of India Office, Calcutta, 1834. Published by H. J. Couchman.

³ D. A. B., p. 5.

⁴ G. U. B. S. S. Part II. Vol. II. p. 389.

⁵ D'Orleans, P. H., From Tonkin to India, London, 1898, p. 310.

⁶ G. U. B. S. S., Part II, Vol. II. p. 615.

Namkyeng :—A stream which rises in the hills between Lai Hsak (Lethet) and Ho Loung in the Southern Shan states and flows southwards past the town of Ho Pong. ¹

Namkai :—A stream in the trans-Talween Northern Shan state of Kangtung. It rises in the hills that separate Mong Yawng from Mongkai and flows west-wards into the Nam Ngawm, a tributary of the Nam Lwi. At Mangkai it is ten yards wide and eight inches deep in March. It has a course of about 16 miles. ²

Nam Kawng :—The Mogaung river is called Nam Kawng by the Shans. It rises to the south-east of the Amber Mines in about latitude 26° and flows in a south-easterly direction past Laban, Kamaing and Mogaung into the Irrawadi river, some fifteen miles above Sinko. From Laban down to Kamaing the river is from fifty to eighty yards wide in June, and at Kamaing it divides into two channels, the western one sixty yards and the eastern one hundred yards broad. From here down to its mouth it averages from one hundred and twenty to one hundred and fifty yards in width. In the rains it has a current of from three to three and a half miles an hour.

The Mogaung is navigable for small launches from June to November as far as Laban, and probably as far as Sadu-Sot. Above this the river bed becomes rocky and shallow and its banks are uninhabited. Mogaung can be reached from the mouth of the river in one or two days by launch; boats take one day from Kamaing to Laban. The river is navigable for large country boats all the year round.

At Laban and Kamaing the river is fordable in the hot weather, but is crossed by boat in the rains. At Kamaing in January the crossing is eighty yards wide and three feet deep. ³

¹ G. U. B. S. S., Part II. Vol. II. p. 616.

² Ibid. p. 612.

³ G. U. B. S. S. pp. 614 and 339.

In this connection, the history of Mung Mau and Mogaung, may be helpful. Chan-Ai-Mo-Kam-Neng, of the race of Kun-Su of Maing-Kaing Maing-Nyaung, in about 1210 A. D., reigned in the Mau country for ten years and had two sons Chau-Kam-Pha and Sam-Lung-Pha, the latter perhaps the most remarkable personage in the Mau history. The first succeeded to the throne of Mung-Mau at the death of his father in 1220 A. D., but Sam-Lung-Pha had already, five years previously, become tsaubwa of Mung-Kaung or Mogaung, when he established a city on the banks of the Nam Kaung, a short distance above the site of the present Mogaung. ¹

If this river Nam Kaung is identical with the Namkiur of the Buranji then it cannot be elsewhere other than the region round about present Mogaung, the latitude and longitude of which are 25° 15" and 97° respectively.

Mogaung :—A subdivision of Myitkyina district (Latitude 25° to 26° and Longitude 97° to 98°). It is roughly of the shape of an irregular quadrilateral, the lower corners being at Khaung-Kya (Hkaung-chi) on the west bank of the third and Upper Defile on the south-east, and the Kachin hills to the south of lake Indaw-gyi on the south-west. Along the eastern side it is bounded by the Myitkyina subdivision and on the west by upper Chindwin district. To the north the subdivision stretches indefinitely. Mogaung is the head-quarters of the subdivision of that name. The latitude and longitude are 25° 15" and 97° respectively.

The histories of Mogaung and Mo-Luyin (Mong Kawng and Mong Yang) do not overlap, certainly not in the days of their respective power. It seems probable therefore that they were at different times capitals of the same Shan principality. ²

¹ H. S., pp. 17 and 40.

² G. U. B. S. S., Vol. II. Part II, p. 332.

The legendary Hkua Lu is said to have established himself at Mong Kong on the Chindwin (the Maing Kaing of modern maps in the state of Singking Hkamti) and to have ruled all the country west of the Irrawadi. The tract of the country is occasionally referred to as the country of the Nara, and until it was conquered by Sam-Long—Hpa it may be presumed that it was an independent state. The native traditions say that the Naras were the aboriginal population of this region. Elias thinks their original home was in Hkamti, which formerly extended far beyond its present limits and was divided into two parts—Ai Hkam and Aitou. ¹

The Naras were a valley-dwelling agricultural people, and far more civilized than the hill tribes who surrounded them. They seem to have remained independent till the time of Hso Hkan Hpa, the Nam Mao valley king, whose brother and Commander-in-chief, Sam Long Hpa apparently became the first tsaubwa of Mogaung and of all the country around. He was tributary to his brother and was appointed several years before he undertook his extensive conquests, in Manipur, Assam, and other neighbouring countries. He took possession as tsaubwa in 577 B.E. (A.D. 1215) and we have seen that he was the founder of the city of Mogaung. ² It is related that he was crossing the Nam Kawng, now known as the Mogaung river,

¹ H. S., p. 38.

Wilcox, in the Asiatic researches, XVII, p. 441, says that the Hkamti Shans told him that they came from the borders of Siam and Yunnan, and that when they first arrived in their present locality they found it inhabited by "Lamas of the Khaphok tribe."

Mojar Boileau Pemberton fixed the original home of the Naras in Upper Assam, "in the country of the Moamerias or Muttucks," but he also says that the Shan chieftain of Mogaung "is also called the Nara Raja by the Singphos, and it appears that the term is also applied to the Shans between Hookong and Mogaung."

Francis Buchanan Hamilton says that they spoke a dialect very little different from that of Siam and called themselves Tailong, the great Shans. This is supported by the fact that at the present day the language of the Shans west of the Irrawadi is more easily understood by the Siamese than any other Tai dialect.

² See above pp. 53-54.

a short distance above the site of the present Mogaung, he found a "sapphire drum" (Kawng is the Shan word for a drum) in the bed of the stream. This he regarded as a good omen and established his capital near the spot and called it Mong Kawng. The classical name of Mogaung was Udaigiri-rata.

Sam long Hpa's reign as chief of Mogaung lasted only thirteen years for in 1228 A.D., while he was engaged in his conquest to the west, he appears to have been succeeded by a nephew named Noi Hsan Hpa, a son of the Mao Shan King, who took his father's title, Sao Hkan Hpa, when he became tsaubwa of Mogaung. ¹

Lakhun:—A Kachin village in Myitkyina district, situated in 27° north latitude and 97°41' east longitude. The inhabitants are Khamti Shans. This can be identified with the Lakham of the Buranji. ²

Charaideo Hills:—This is in the Dhopabar mauza, in Sib-sagar district was once the burial place of the Ahom kings, and the ruins of their tombs are still to be seen, though they were rifled of their treasures by the Muhammadan invaders in the seventeenth century. ³

Salaguri:—This is in Namtidol tahsil of the Sibsagar district. It is famous for its export of Pat Silk. ⁴

Adhaipur:—Military Police outpost. It is at the foot of the hills occupied by the independent Naga tribes. ⁵

Borduar:—This is in the hills east of the Dikho river and inhabited by the tribes of independent Nagas, who were in political relations with the Ahom government. ⁶

¹ G. U. B. S. S., Part II, Vol. II, pp. 334-35.

² P. A. B.; p. 13.

³ A. D. G., Vol. VII, p. 5.

⁴ Ibid. p. 158.

⁵ Ibid. p. 226.

⁶ Ibid. p. 58.

Disang river:—It rises in the hills occupied by the independent Nagas east of Sibsagar town. It flows a north-easterly course till it reaches the actual Assam territory and then curves back and runs westward right along the north of Abhaipur and Silakuti mauza. When parallel to and about eight miles from Sibsagar town, it takes a bend towards the north and finally empties itself into the Brahmaputra after a total course of one hundred and thirty six miles. Its principal tributaries are, on the right bank the Diroi and the Dimau, and on the left bank the Taokak and the Safrai. The Disang flows in a deep channel and does not change its course, but in the rains it often overtops its banks. ¹

Dikho river:—West of the Disang is the Dikho, which rises right in the Naga Hills, where it forms the boundary between Assam proper and the independent Naga territory. It enters the district south of Nazira, flows past that place and Sibsagar town, and falls into the Brahmaputra after a course of 120 miles, more than half of which, however, lies in the hills. Its principal tributary in Sibsagar is the Darika, which flows a little the north of Sibsagar town and falls into the Dikho near its mouth. Both of these rivers overtop their banks when in flood, and steps have accordingly been taken to protect the country in the immediate vicinity. ²

Garhgaon:—This was the capital of the Ahom kings, ³ in present Sibsagar district.

Namrup:—There is a tributary of Dihing named Namrup and the adjacent region is called by that name. Now it is a railway station in the North East Frontier Railway. It is in the present Sibsagar district.

Dihing:—as mentioned in the Buranjis, may refer to either of the two modern rivers:

¹. Ibid. pp. 6-7.

². A. D. G. Vol. VII, p. 7.

³. Ibid. p. 28.

The Buri Dihing:—During its passage through the Sibsagar district, the Brahmaputra receives many tributaries from the south. On the extreme east is the Buri Dihing, which for the last few miles of its course, passes through the borders between the districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur. This river actually enters the Sibsagar district. Buri Dihing is the most important river south of the Brahmaputra and it rises in the Patkai range, and flows a tortuous course with a generally westerly direction till it falls into the Brahmaputra, after a course of about one hundred and fifty miles. Its principal tributaries are, on the right bank the Digboi, the Tipling, the Tingrai, and the Sesa; and on the left bank the Tirap and the Namsang. After leaving the hills, it flows along the southern border of the district past the important settlement at Margherita. It then winds its way through an outlying spur of the Assam range, passes Jaipur, the site of an old cantonment, and Naharkatia, whence it is crossed by the North-East Frontier Railway, and the Khowang; and during the last part of its course forms the boundary between the Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts. Below Jaipur the floods of the river do some damage, and an embankment was constructed in the time of the Ahom Rajas. The spill water is, however, said to have a fertilizing effect, where the flood is not deep enough to injure the crop. Even as far from its mouth as Margherita, the Dihing is about 200 yards in width. The bed is sandy and in places obstructed with snags, and it is not very largely used for purposes of navigation. ¹

The Noa Dihing and Dibru:—The Noa Dihing rises in the Singpho Hills and pursues a westerly and then a northerly course till it falls into the Brahmaputra east of Sadiya. Throughout the greater part of its course it flows through jungle land, and, as in the higher reaches the current is very strong, it is of little importance in the interior economy of the district. It is connected with the Buri Dihing, and its principal tributaries are, on the left bank the Dirak, and on the right the Tengapani. The country between the Dibru-Sadiya Railway and the Brahmaputra is drained by the Dibru, but though it has given its name to

¹ A. D. G. Vol. viii pp. 10-11.

the capital of the district, it is not a stream of very much importance. It rises in the Buri Dihing mauza, and receives in the course of its journey towards the Brahmaputra, a large number of petty streams, the most important of which are the Dum Duma and the Dangori. ¹

The Patkai :—For many centuries there had been communication between Lakhimpur and Burma over the Patkai Hills. It was by this route that the Ahoms entered Assam in the thirteenth century, and it was across the Patkai that the Burmese retired nearly six hundred years later, when they were driven out of the Brahmaputra valley by the British troops. In the cold weather of 1895-96, a reconnaissance survey was made for the purpose of estimating the cost of carrying a railway over the hills to Burma. The party marched via Ningrangnong and Namkri, to the summit of the Patkai, where their camp was pitched at about four thousand feet above sea level. They then followed the Nongyong to its junction with the Loglai, went down that river till it fell into the Turung, and marched along the Turung into the Hukong valley. The party experienced no difficulties in this journey, but it was clear that the cost of carrying a railway over the hills would be extremely heavy. The plan of the railway was abandoned owing to the high cost of the project. The Hukong Valley is very fertile, but is sparsely peopled, and the long march over the hills is a serious obstacle to the development of much trade between Burma and Lakhimpur. ²

¹. A. D. G. V 1. viii pp. 10-11.

². Ibid. p. 90.

CHAPTER IV

EARLY AHOM KINGS

Sukapha the Great (1228-68) :

We have dealt at length in the introduction with the course of events that was prevailing in Assam and its neighbouring countries at the time of the advent of the Ahoms. There we have noticed that by the beginning of the thirteenth century, Upper Burma and Western Yunnan, occupied by the people of the Shan origin, formed a group of petty states. Sukapha was the leader of the body of Shans who laid the foundation of the Ahom kingdom in Assam. The word Sukapha means 'a tiger from heaven.'

Sukapha's ancestry, original homeland and the reason of his leaving it, are shrouded in mystery. The chronicles of the Ahoms are not unanimous on these points.

It is mentioned in one of the Ahom Buranjis that Santaipha, Khumkhum, and Santiaphun ruled successively in *Munlin*. Santaiphun had three sons and one daughter. He died, having divided his kingdom among his three sons. Pameoplun, one of them, extended his kingdom as far as Munphagun. Later on, one Sanlantantaipha migrated to Munphagun from Mungka-Mungja ; he was a great warrior, and his name soon became a terror to the surrounding Rajas. Pameoplun made a treaty with him and gave his sister in marriage. By her Sanlantantaipha had a son named Sukapha. Pameoplun, who till then was childless, looked upon Sukapha as his successor. Subsequently, however, his wife gave birth to a male child named Sukhanpha. As Sukapha had now no chance of succeeding his uncle, he went westward, accompanied by a large number of followers, and having crossed several ranges of mountains and conquered the *Nagas* and other hill tribes on his way, he at length reached the plains of Upper Assam, where he established a kingdom. ¹

¹ R. P. H. R. A. pp-16-17.

According to another Ahom *Buranji*, Taolulu, the eldest son of Khunlung, became king of Mungrimungram. He was succeeded by his son Chao-Changbun, who in turn by his son Chao-Changnyeu. The latter was succeeded by his brother, Chao-taipha, after whom his son Phanlangjeng—Klangrai became king. After his death, his brother, Taongaklem got the throne. This king was succeeded by his son, Taokhunming. When the latter died, his son, Taokhunkum succeeded him. He was succeeded by his son, Chao-Taihung. His eldest son was Chao-Tailung and the youngest, Pameoplung. Phuchangkhang, the third, succeeded him. Phuchangkhang had three sons, two of them became kings of some better neighbouring countries, and Sukapha, the third, succeeded him. Sukapha, being unwilling to rule there left the country and migrated westward. He arrived in the country Mungdunshunkham (a country full of gardens of gold).¹ It is mentioned in the *Buranji* that this country is now called Assam.²

It is mentioned in the Decdhai Assam *Buranji* that Sukapha was the son of Pameupung, king of Mungjamungji. His mother was Langnamap, the daughter of Thaokhenmung. The same *Buranji*, basing its statement on earlier texts of the same kind, states that Bakal-khamdeng was the father of Sukapha, who was born and brought up in his maternal uncle's house in Maolung or Maulung.³ This is a clear recollection of a matrilinear family system among the early Ahoms, such as still prevails among the Khasis, and other tribal peoples of Assam. We know of no other similar references in our *Buranjis*. Sukapha was brought up there as an heir to the throne, as his maternal uncle, Tyao-tyanglau, the king of Maulung, had no child. But subsequently a son, Sukhranpha by name, was born to Tyao-tyanglau. As then Sukapha had no hope of succession to the throne, he left for Mungjamungji, the kingdom of his father, Pameupung, and from there he undertook his invasion to Upper Assam.⁴

It is stated in the Purani Assam Buranji that Tyaochangneng, a descendant of Khunlai, settled himself in the kingdom of Mungkhamungja. But he was driven away from there by the enemies to the Moran kingdom. Under similar circumstances, he had to leave that country for the Nara kingdom. The then Nara king had only a daughter, who was given in marriage to Tyaochangneng. Sukapha was born from their union. He was considered as an heir to the throne of his maternal grandfather, the Nara king. Subsequently, a son, Sukranpha by name, was born to the above king, when, there being no possibility of succession to the throne, Sukapha migrated to the western countries, where he founded the Ahom kingdom. ¹

Haliram says that Chaukhunyau, a descendant of Khunlai, became the king of Mungkhramungja country. Next he migrated to Mungkhan, and from there to Mungmau. He gave his sister, Langmungbukhamchen, in marriage to Pameupung, a descendant of Khunlung, and made him the king of Khranangjing country. Sukapha was born to them. He was brought up in his maternal uncle's place. In his nineteenth year of age, he became the king of Khranangjing, his fatherland. Next he migrated to the western country. ²

Kasinath says that Pameupung was the king of Maulung. He was childless and on his death, Tyaoaimkhamneng of Mungkhumungjao country became the king. This king was succeeded by Sukhanpha. Phutyangkhang was the king of Mungmitkupking country. He had three sons. The eldest Sujatpha became the king of Taip country. The second son Sukhampha became the king of Taipong country. The youngest Sukapha succeeded to the kingdom of his father. There ensued a battle between Sukhanpha, king of Maulung, and the king of Junlung country, when Sukhampha asked for aid from Sukapha who refused. Next Sukhanpha invaded the country of Sukapha, who fled to the Mungkang country, and from there he undertook his invasion of Upper Assam. ³

¹. P. A. B., pp-12-13.

². A. B. pp-44-45.

³. Ibid. pp-8-9.

Gunabhiram says that there was a king in Mungringmung-jao country named Khampangpha. After him 11 rulers ruled the country for 357 years, and the last of whom died childless in 1036. Next Tyaotaipong, a prince of Junlung country succeeded to the throne. After this king 15 rulers ruled the country in regular succession, and the last of them had four sons, of whom Sukapha succeeded to the throne. Quarrelling with one of his brothers, Sukapha fled to Mungkan and from there he undertook his campaign to Upper Assam.¹ Basing his statements on some other texts of the same kind, Gunabhiram also states that, among the countries of the Shans, there was a country named Pong, the capital of which was Mangmaorang. Margnau, the king of that country, was succeeded by his two sons, Sukampha and Samlompha. Both of them attacked and occupied Manipur, Cachar and other countries. At last, they quarrelled with each other and one of them planned to go to the western countries. This man was Sukapha, who invaded and occupied Upper Assam after a series of attacks upon the local tribes.²

From the records of the above Buranjis, it appears that Suka-pha was a prince by birth and his country of origin was Maulung in Upper Burma. In these points our views are identical with those of N. Elias, who records, presumably from the Shan chronicles, that Sukapha was a son of Fu-Sang-Kang, the *tsaubwa* of Momiet, a kingdom stretching from the left bank of the Irrawady and Kusambi to the territory of the Khamti Shans in the north.³ The statement of the *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, as to the humble origin of Sukapha, is of doubtful historicity. Though Sukapha left Maulung as a result of some quarrel with his kinsmen, he sent presents to them at a later time when he became the paramount lord of the whole of Upper Assam.⁴ There is no doubt that the original home of the Ahoms was somewhere in the ancient kingdom of Pong, for the Ahoms are genuine Shans, both in their physical type and in their tribal

¹. Barua, G., A. B., pp-78-79.

². Ibid. p-82.

³. H. S., p-50.

⁴. Tamuliphukan, A. B., p. 12

language and written character. The movements of the Ahoms across the Patkai was by no means an isolated occurrence. The Khamtis, the Phakials, the Aitonias, the Turungs and the Khamjangs are all Shan tribes who have, at different times, moved along the same route.

Like his ancestry, his original homeland, and the reason of his leaving it, Sukapha's date of birth and the date of his invasion of Assam, are also bones of contention to the scholars in the field. Though Sukapha was a prince from a Shan Kingdom, the chronicles of the Shans contain no reference to the above facts. It is mentioned in the Deodhai Assam Buranji that Sukapha was born in 1211 and invaded Assam in 1228.¹ Haliram says that the date of birth of Sukapha was the year 1195, and his invasion of Assam took place in 1246.² Kasinath³ and Gunabhiram⁴ do not mention Sukapha's date of birth but only the date of his invasion of Assam as the year 1228. There being no means to confirm these early dates of the *Buranjis*, no scientific and comprehensive study has been made on the topic.

It is mentioned in the Deodhai Assam Buranji that an eclipse of the Sun took place in the reign of Susenpha, in *Lakli Rangseo*, which is equivalent to the year 1486. We know that there was a partial eclipse of the Sun on the 6th March, 1486, of which the maximum phase occurred shortly before local mid-day. The exact time for the centre of eclipse quoted by Oppolzer, was 5h 36m U. T.⁵ The mention has been made in the *Buranji* that Sudangpha, who was the great-grand-father of Susenpha, was the Eighth ruler in the line of the Ahom kings.⁶ So, it becomes clear that before Susenpha, there were some ten rulers who ruled the country. The average span of the reign of the kings from Susenpha to Sudinpha or Chandrakanta Singha,

¹. D. A. B., pp-4-5.

². A. B., pp-44-45.

³. Ibid. pp-8-9.

⁴. Ibid. pp-78-79.

⁵. Record of H. M. Nautical Almanac Office, Royal Greenwich Observatory, Herstmonceux castle, Nr. Hailsham, Sussex. Information communicated to me on the 8th February, 1956. Vide Appendix 'A'

after whom the Burmese occupied the country, is seventeen years, if we overlook the period 1669-81, during which a number of weak kings ruled the country amidst internal strife and dissension simultaneously with the consequences of the foreign invasion. The later period was generally characterised by more dissension and foreign invasion than the earlier. We may therefore assign up to twentyone years for each of the peaceful and prosperous reigns of the early rulers before Susenpha, excluding the period of interregnum of about twelve years. Thus we get roughly the early part of the thirteenth century as the date of Sukapha's invasion of Assam.

The coins of Suklenmung also testify to the above mentioned dates. The obverse of the coin contains the five-lined legend—Chaopha Suklenmun pinchao lakni plekni, which means that in the 15th year of the Jovin cycle of the sixty years in the reign of the great king Suklenmung, which can be calculated the year 1544.¹ We know that there were some fourteen rulers who ruled before Suklenmung. Here also if we assign some twenty one years for each of the fourteen rulers before Suklenmung, we get the early part of the thirteenth century. So we find no reason to discredit the statement of Haliram that Sukapha was born in 1195, and the statement recorded in the *Deodhai Assam Buranji* that, in the year 1228, Sukapha arrived at the border of Upper Assam to invade it.

About the year 1215, Sukapha left Maulung, his home-country, with nine thousand infantry, three hundred cavalry and two elephants. For thirteen years, he wandered about the hilly country of the atkai, making occasional raids on the Naga villages, and in 1228, he arrived at Khamjang, the north-eastern border of Upper Assam.² From the course of his expedition, it appears that Sukapha followed the land route from China to India through Yunnan, Upper Burma and Assam.³

As soon as Sukapha crossed the Khamjang river and reached to the Nongnyang lake, some Nagas attempted to resist his

¹. See p. 32.

². A. H. B., p-44.

³. Hall, D. G. E., *A History of South-East Asia*, London, 1905, p-81.

advance, but he defeated all of them. This great victory of Sukapha against the powerful Nagas of the region created such widespread terror that the other Nagas of the neighbourhood hastened to make their submission. Leaving Kangkhrumung, one of his nobles, to rule the conquered country, Sukapha proceeded to Daikaorang, Khamnangngpu and Namrup. In 1229, Sukapha got on the rafts and ascended the Dihing river but, finding the place unsuitable, he retraced his steps and reached to Tipam and stayed there up to 1230. Finding the country to be overflowed by the water of the Dihing river, Sukapha put Kanngan, one of his nobles, in charge of the place and proceeded downstream. In 1234, he reached Abhoypur and stopped there for 5 years until 1238. As that country was thinly populated, he did not remain there long and proceeded down the river Tilao and arrived in the Habung country where he lived up to 1241. While there the Ahoms lived by cultivation. But this place also was liable to inundation and a heavy flood necessitated another move. He then proceeded down the river till he reached the mouth of the Dikhau. Then he advanced upstream and arrived at a valley called Jakunpak. From there he ascended the river and got to Silpani where he remained for some time. While at Silpani, Sukapha kept close contact with the Jakunpak valley where the majority of his followers had already settled. In 1243, Sukapha appointed Mungringmungching as the Governor of the valley and himself proceeded to Simaluguri. There he halted and offered a feast to his nobles and followers. He enquired and found that there were three thousand and three hundred ghats at the Namdang river from which the inhabitants used to draw the water. Considering that place to be thickly populated and apprehending some rebellion from the local peoples, Sukapha left Simaluguri for Timan and stopped there. Staying there for the next six years, he left that country and reached Timak in 1249. Next he made a settlement at Mungtinamao and stayed there the whole year 1250. In 1251, Sukapha took some of his followers and went to Charaideo on a small hill and constructed a town there.¹ We believe that Sukapha selected

¹ A. H. B. pp-44-47. The same story is told with slight variation in all the other *Buranjis*.

Charaideo as suitable for his royal city and palace, owing to the fact that it was above the level of the plain land and was situated just adjacent to a small hill, which had importance from the strategic point of view.

Next Sukapha sent a series of campaigns to the neighbouring countries, which were ruled at that time by the Chutias, the Morans, the Borahis, the Nagas, the Kacharis, and the most powerful Kingdom of the region, Kamrup. After having conquered the countries of the Chutias, the Kacharis and the Kamata king, Sukapha allowed them to remain as they were in the past on condition of offering tribute.¹ The Borahi king Badancha and the Moran king Thakumtha acknowledged the supremacy of the Ahom king and regularly supplied him thenceforward with the various products of the jungles, elephants, dye, honey and mats. Sukapha adopted conciliatory measures towards these peoples, and by treating them as equals, and encouraging inter-marriage, absorbed them into one nation.²

Sukapha conquered practically the whole of Upper Assam, the tract south-west of the Chutias and the east of the Kacharis to the Patkai Range at the border of Upper Burma, and founded his capital at Charaideo, in the modern district of Sibsagar, which possessed the advantage of being situated at the centre of his directly governed territory. He had also conquered all the countries on the way from Upper Burma to the eastern border of Upper Assam and appointed his nobles to rule over those regions. He made friendship with his brother rulers in his ancestral home in Upper Burma, and sent them presents of gold and silver.³ Sukapha died in 1268.

Sukapha was a very brave and enterprising king. From a very early age, he began a career of wars and conquests. His ambitions for supremacy and power might have caused him to become a source of unrest under the disorganised administration of his home-country. His army consisted of males only, who.

¹ A. H. B., p-33.

² Tamuliphukan, A. B., p-11.

³ Ibid. p-12.

unlike many other Asian armies of the time, had no women with them. His troops were said to have carried their provision with them. This indicates the far-sightedness of Sukapha and his ideas of self-sufficiency, whether or not in his army organisation he was following the traditions of other Shan peoples. He fought with and defeated all the hill tribes on his way to Assam. He also defeated most of the rulers and chiefs of Medieval Assam, who came to resist him. By far the most significant and decisive of his victories was his success in winning over the powerful Nagas of the north-eastern frontier of India. In a word, his career of conquests knew no defeats.

Sukapha was a good administrator. He adopted conciliatory measures towards the indigenous peoples of Assam by showing respect to their sentiments and culture. He was reasonable. He did not fight against the people who acknowledged his supremacy. Unlike many other invaders of India, Sukapha was not a raider. Pillage and loot were unknown to his military career. It was never found his intention to plunder but to rule. He placed one of his nobles to administer each of the conquered countries on his way to Assam. According to the necessity of the situation, he could be cruel or kind. To deal with the hostile Nagas of the Patkai, Sukapha became so cruel that they never dared rebellion a second time, not to speak of during his lifetime but even a century and a half later.¹ To make the Ahoms powerful and their rule permanent, Sukapha deliberately undertook conciliatory steps towards the neighbouring kings, on condition of tribute. He appointed Katakis in the vassal kingdoms to maintain good relations, a fact considered most essential for the foundation, growth and prosperity of his newly established regime. He appointed two chiefs, Buragohain and Bargohain, as his assistants, who exercised enormous power in all the affairs of the state, being responsible only to the king.² The political instincts which actuated the Ahoms to record the chief events of the reign in the Buranjis, the most valuable of their contributions to Indian culture, are traceable from the command of Sukapha to the effect that the court chroniclers should record the detailed particulars of every reign.³

¹. See p-81.

². See Chapter, VI.

³. D. A. B., p-90.

Suteupha (1268-1281) :

Suteupha succeeded to the Ahom throne, on the death of his father, Sukapha the great, about the year 1268. In this reign the first *Buragohain*, Klinglumangrai, who accompanied Suka-pha from the Shan land died, and his son Thaoruru succeeded him. Similarly on the death of the *Bargohain*, Kanangan, at this time, his son Chaobin succeeded him. ¹

Suteupha fought with the Kacharis, whose kingdom at that time extended along the south bank of the Brahmaputra, from the Dikhu to the Kalang, and included the valley of the Dhansiri and the tract which now forms the North Cachar Subdivision. The Kachari king was defeated in the battle and the outlying Kachari settlements east of the Dikhu river were abandoned to the Ahoms.² For the next hundred years, this river appears to have formed the boundary between the two nations, and no hostilities are recorded until 1490, when a battle was fought on its banks.³ Until the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Yasanarayan became the Kachari king, nothing more is known of Kachari affairs, but it may be said that, during this period, the Kachari kings held the greater part of the Nowgong district and the North Cachar Hills and gradually extended their rule into the plains of Cachar. It is impossible, however, to ascertain the name of the Kachari king who fought with Suteupha.

It is mentioned in one of the *Buranjis* that there was a battle between the Naras of Mungkan and the people of Mantara or Burma. In the struggle the Naras were defeated and asked help from Suteupha, who replied that he would send a force to their assistance if the Nara king offered him a daughter in marriage. On the refusal of the latter, a quarrel ensued and Suteupha sent an army against the Nara king. In the battle the Ahoms were worsted and the *Buragohain*, who led the expedition, was slain. The *Bargohain* was immediately sent with

¹: Barua H. K., A. B. p-8. ,

²: Dhekialphukan, H., Ibid. p-49.

³: A. H. B., pp-52-53.

a second battallion, but, instead of fighting, he made friendship with the Naras. Suteupha disgraced and imprisoned the *Bargohain* on his return, but subsequently forgave him on the request and mediation of other nobles.¹ Suteupha ruled the country for 13 years and died in 1281.

Subinpha (1281-1293) :

Suteupha had four sons, of whom Subinpha succeeded him in 1281. In this reign the post of *Bargohain* was given to a new noble, Thaomang-saobin-seng-barpon by name. Subinpha does not appear to have made any addition to the territory conquered by his predecessors. He distributed his subjects in equal divisions between the *Buragohain* and the *Bargohain*. He died in the year 1293.²

Sukhangpha (1293-1332) :

Sukhangpha succeeded to the Ahom throne in 1293. From the time of Sukapha to the reign of this king, a long period of peace and order existed in the kingdom and the Ahoms succeeded in fully establishing their supremacy over the indigenous population of the land. Though the *Buranjis* do not mention the fact, there can be no doubt that they greatly increased in numbers partly by the process of natural growth but probably also by the arrival of fresh immigrants from their original land. By this time the Ahoms became strong enough to maintain their hegemony against the powerful neighbouring kings. The outcome was a series of feuds and wars which ultimately made them the paramount authority over the whole of the Brahmaputra valley.³

Sukhangpha's ambition for territorial aggrandizement, brought him to war with the powerful Kamata king Pratapadvaj. Hostilities continued for several years with enormous losses on both

¹ H. A., p-79. This is recorded by Gait who was presumably using a manuscript source ; but he does not mention it by name and the events are not recorded in any *Buranjis* available to us.

² Barua, H. K., A. B., p-14.

³ Barua, G., A. B., p-86.

sides, and at last, the Kamatesvar, being tired of incessant wars, sent an envoy on the advice of his courtiers for peace. Subsequently a treaty was concluded between the belligerent parties as a result of which Pratapadhvaj gave his daughter, Rajani, in marriage to the Ahom king.¹ The chronicles say nothing about any increase of Sukhangpha's territory as a result of this war, but it must at least have strengthened his position.

A noble of Satgharia, Taphrikhin by name, was appointed to the post of *Bargohain* by this king. Sukhangpha died in 1332, after a reign of 32 years. He had four sons, Sukhrangpha, Surupha, Tyaokhamti and Tao Sulai, the last mentioned being by the Kamata princess Rajani.² The territory of the kingdom certainly included Athgaon and Saring, which were occupied by the Kamata king in the following reign.

Gait records from one of the *Buranjis* which is not available to us that the Nara king of Mungkaung demanded tribute from Sukhangpha, on the ground of his being the lineal descendant of the Maulung chief in whose reign Sukapha had emigrated. The demand was not complied with and soon afterwards the Nara king died.³ Such tribute had never been demanded before, as far as is known. The Shan chronicles tell us nothing about this matter. It is mentioned in the table of the Mogaung *tsaubwas* that Chau-Kun-Lao reigned there from 1248-1308 and his son Chau-Pu-Reing from 1308-1344.⁴ From the alleged length of the former's reign, it appears that he was quite powerful. Sukhangpha, however, was strong enough to resist him.

The very long and successful reign of Sukhangpha, though the *Buranjis* devote only a few lines to it, was evidently one of great importance in which the strength and influence of the Ahoms greatly increased.

¹. A. H. B., p-46.

². Barua, H. K., A. B., p-15.

³. H. A., pp-80-81.

⁴. H. S., p-45.

Sukhrangpha (1332-1364)

Sukhrangpha, the eldest of the last king's four sons, ascended the Ahom throne on the death of his father. He appointed his step-brother, Tao Sulai or Tao Pulai, son of the Kamata princess Rajani, the Saring Raja (governor of Saring). Then there ensued a conspiracy among the nobles and princes of the royal family against the present king. The plot being detected, Tao Sulai fled to his kinsman, the Raja of Kamata, Durlabh Narayan. Being requested for help against the Ahom king, Durlabh marched with an army to Athgaon and from thence to Saring and constructed a fort there. Sukhrangpha became alarmed and, before resorting to direct resistance, opened negotiations with the conspirators. This gave good results. The Kamata king withdrew from the Ahom territory. Subsequently Sukhrangpha realised that *Bargohain* Taphrikhin was the person who was really responsible for the revolt and accordingly determined to punish him. The *Bargohain* concealed himself until the affair had blown off. He was subsequently forgiven and taken back into favour.¹ In this reign, Thaophrangdam, the eldest son of Thaoruru, became *Buragohain*. Sukhrangpha died in 1364, after a reign of 32 years.²

The reign of Sukhrangpha marks the first mention of revolt on the part of the great nobles. It is evident that by this time the Ahom kingdom had grown in size and the *Gohains*, who were put in charge of the large provinces, were approaching the status of feudal lords.

Sutupha (1364-1376) :

On the death of Sukhrangpha in 1364, his younger brother, Sutupha succeeded to the throne. There were continued conflicts with the Chutias during this reign. Ultimately the Chutia king, Sankhadhvaj (1364-1399), pretended a friendship with the Ahoms and invited the Ahom king to a friendly meeting. At

¹. A. H. B. p-48.

². Barua, H. K., A. B., p-15.

last, in 1376, the Chutia king visited Sutupha at Chapaguri and invited him to a boat-race on the Safrai river. He took him on to his own barge without attendants and treacherously murdered him there. ¹

This is the first mention of the Chutia kingdom in the *Burānjis*. It is evident that they were growing in power at the time.

Interregnum (1376-1380) :

On the death of Sutupha, there was no suitable person in the royal family, whom the great nobles considered worthy of the throne, and so, for four years, the *Bargohain* and *Buragohain* carried on themselves the administration of the kingdom. ²

Tyaokhamti (1380-1389) :

At last, in 1380, realising the many difficulties of governing the country without a king, the great nobles, after having had a consultation among themselves, decided to elect Tyaokhamti, the third son of Sukhangpha, to the throne. In the reign of this king, two new nobles, Saothaithum and Paria Tyatanbin, became *Buragohain* and *Bargohain* respectively. ³

Immediately after the accession, Tyaokhamti sent an expedition against the Chutia king to avenge the murder of Sutupha. He had two queens, the elder of whom was left in charge of the administration during his absence from the capital. The elder queen was on bad terms with the younger who was pregnant at that time. Considering that the newly born child would be the heir to the throne and the younger queen would become queen-mother, the elder queen took advantage of her position as regent to cause a false accusation to be preferred against the younger queen. The charge was investigated and declared true, when the elder queen ordered the younger to be beheaded. The nobles,

¹ A. H. B., pp-48-49.

² Ibid. p-49.

³ Barua, H. K., A. B., p-16.

however, seeing that she was pregnant, instead of killing her, set her adrift on the Brahmaputra on a raft. The king became victorious in his campaign against the Chutias, but was simply horrified, on his return to the capital, on hearing the news of execution of his favourite queen, especially when a new and impartial enquiry showed that the allegations against her were false. He was however, too much under the influence of the elder queen to venture to take action against her. This, and his failure to prevent her from committing numerous acts of oppression, irritated the nobles so much that in 1389, they caused him to be assassinated.¹

Though the story of the unfortunate queen, which has an important sequel, may well contain legendary elements, it gives some indication of a further stage in the evolution of the Ahom state. The king is now surrounded by a large court and a harem, and the queens and officials are very important and influential. The old tribal organization had become a settled kingdom.

Interregnum (1389-1397) :

There was again no suitable successor to the throne except Tao Sulai, the fourth son of king Sukhangpha by the Kamata princess, Rajani. But this prince had already incurred much displeasure of the great nobles for his several attempts to subvert the empire. So the great nobles began to rule the country without a king for the second time.²

Some years later, a man named Thao Sheokhen went across the Brahmaputra to trade in cattle, and there, in Habung village, he saw a youth named Sudang of such noble characteristic that after proper enquiries, it was learnt that he was the son of Tyao-khamti's younger queen. The raft on which she was set adrift had floated to this Habung village, where a Brahmin gave the unfortunate woman shelter. She died, after giving birth to this boy, who was brought up by the Brahmin along with his

¹. Tamuliphukan, A. B., pp-14-15.

². A. H. B., p-49.

own children. The nobles of the capital were informed of this, and after proper verification and consultation, they brought the youth and placed him on the throne. ¹

This is the story as given in the *Buranjis*. It is too romantic and is too suggestive of similar stories elsewhere, to be worthy of credence. It may well be that this story was evolved to account for the influence of Brahminism in the Ahom court. It is notable that from the reign of Sudangpha, the Brahminical influence increased at court, at the expense of that of the nobles. There is no reference to Brahmins being present at the courts of earlier kings, but from now onwards such references become numerous. Evidently the reign of Sudangpha marks an important stage in the Hinduisation of the Ahoms.

Sudangpha (1397-1407) :

Sudangpha ascended the throne in 1397, when he was a boy of fifteen years of age. ² The age of the king on accession is not generally given in the *Buranjis*. It may be that in this case Sudangpha is stated to be still a boy in order to reinforce the story of his origin. As he appears to have taken control with the energy and statecraft of a grown man, the statement of his age seems suspiciously like the insertion of the chronicler. We believe that Sudangpha was full grown when he came to the throne, and was probably not related to the older royal family, but to one already influenced by the Brahminical faith.

Having been brought up in a Brahmin's house Sudangpha was called 'Brahmin Prince.' He built a town at Charguya near the Dihing river. This reign marks the early stage in the growth of Brahminical influence amongst the Ahoms. Sudangpha brought with him, from the Habung country, the Brahmin who had given his mother shelter and reared him up along with his own children. He appointed the Brahmin as his confidential adviser and the sons of the Brahmin and other relatives

¹ Tamüliphukan, A. B., pp-14-15.

² Barua, G., A. B., pp-89-90.

were given high posts in the administration. The influence of these Brahmins had, at last, caused the tribal Ahom court to be greatly Hinduised, and thenceforward Hindu rites and customs became a regular practice in the capital. Sudangpha founded the Singarighar festival and was the first king to mint coins, recorded in the *Buranji*. Evidently this king appears to have assumed the dignified royal title 'Maharaja' and 'Rajesvar Chakravarti.'¹

Chastisement of the Tipamias :

The Tipam chiefs who were dissatisfied with the new regime, conspired a plot against Sudangpha. The king being informed of this, abstained from taking any direct action. He caused a stockade to be constructed for catching elephants and having caught some, invited the Tipamias to join in celebrating the occasion by a feast. When the festivities were in full swing and all suspicion had disappeared, the conspirators were suddenly overpowered and some of them who preferred fighting to confinement were put to death.²

Battle with the Naras :

Thus having disposed of his more active enemies, Sudangpha endeavoured to conciliate the rest of the Tipamias by marrying Chao Nangsheng, the daughter of one of their chiefs named Khuntai. The girl, however, was already enamoured of a Tipamia named Chao Tashulai, and the latter, after dining once with the king, sent a ring to the queen through an attendant, who brought the matter to the notice of the king. Immediately an explanation was called for from Tashulai, who fled forthwith to Chao Shurunpha, the Nara king.³ Tashulai informed the Nara Raja that there was no king of his family in Mungdunshunkham (Assam). Thus informed Shurunpha sent an expedition under Tashenpau or Tachanbing *Bargohain* to invade the Ahom kingdom. The Nara army marched down accordingly and

¹. Barua, H. K., A. B., pp-18-20.

². A. H. B., pp-49-50.

³. This name does not occur in the Shan chronicles.

pitched tents near Kuliarbari at Tipam. As soon as the news reached to Sudangpha, he marched at the fore-front of a large army riding his elephant, Pairin, to meet the Naras. A battle was fought in which the Naras were defeated but Sudangpha himself received a slight injury from a spear-thrust from the enemy. ¹ The Nara soldiers were pursued by the Ahoms as far as the Patkai. In 1401, a formal treaty was concluded at the initiative of the Ahom *Bargohain* Tyatanbin, and the Nara *Bargohain*, Tashenpau, as a result of which the Patkai was fixed as the boundary between the two countries. The meeting of the two *Bargohains*, who conducted the negotiations for peace, took place on the side of the Nongnyang lake, twentyeight miles southwest of Margherita, and statues of them were carved on the rock there. ² We have, however, not been able to find any trace of these statues at the present time. A solemn oath of amity and good will was sworn, and consecrated by the cutting up of a fowl. The word Patkai is said to be derived from this occurrence. The full name was *Patkai-seng-kan*, which means "Cut-fowl-oath-sworn." The former name of the Pass at the time of invasion of Assam by Sukapha was *Dai-kau-rang* or "the Junction of nine peaks." ³

Invasion of Kamata by the Ahoms :

Tashulai, being thus deprived of his asylum, took shelter with the Kamata king, presumably Sukranka (1400-1415). ⁴ Sudangpha accordingly demanded the surrender of Tao Sulai from the Kamatesvar, who refused to give him up. Sudangpha immediately despatched an expedition under the leadership of the *Bargohain*, Tyatanbin, to invade Kamata. At last, the Kamata king, after due consultation with his ministers, decided to make friendship with the Ahoms. He gave his daughter, Bhajani to Sudangpha in marriage, with a dowry of two elephants and a number of horses and of male and female servants, as well as a quantity of gold and silver. ⁵

¹. A. H. B., p-50.

². & ³ Barua, H. K., A. B., pp-18-19.

⁴. See Chapter VII.

⁵. A. H. B., pp-50-51.

Invasion of Bengal by the Ahoms :

It is mentioned in the *Deodhai Assam Buranji* that during the reign of Sudangpha, there were struggles between the Kamata king and the Muhammadans of Bengal.¹ The *Yogini Tantra* also mentions a Muhammadan attack on Kamrup, in 1396, the 6th regnal year of Ghiyasu-d-din Azam Shah.² But the date of the above chronicle is not correct. The Muslim chronicles are silent on this point. Sikandar Shah, father of Ghiyasu-d-din, lived till October, 1393.³ Ghiyasu-d-din, who had revolted against his father, was busy fighting with his father till the end of 1393. It is not at all likely that in the following year, instead of consolidating his position in Bengal, he sent an invasion to a distant country like Kamrup. The statement of the *Deodhai Assam Buranji* shows that the invasion took place after 1397 and before 1407, because that is the reigning period of Sudangpha. The same *Buranji* states that before the conflict with the Muhammadans, the Kamata king gave shelter to Tao Sulai. The history of Tao Sulai shows that he could seek his asylum only after a long time from the date of accession of Sudangpha. Therefore, we suggest that the Muhammadan invasion of Kamata took place some time at the very beginning of the fifteenth century, when the Kamata king incurred displeasure of Sudangpha on account of showing favour to the fugitive and vagabond Tao Sulai. Taking advantage of this, the Bengal Sultan invaded the territory of the Kamatesvar, who, being faced with the double danger, concluded peace with his co-religionist by matrimonial alliance and turned against the invader in combination with his new ally Sudangpha. The *Bengali* army could not make headway against the allied local armies and planned retreat. But that was not the only story of their misfortune. Sudangpha sent a large expedition to invade Bengal. As a result the whole of the north-eastern Bengal up to the river Karatoya was conquered by the Ahoms.⁴ The above fact is confirmed by the statement of the Muslim Chronicles, which state that the in-

¹. D. A. B., p-12.

². R. P. H. R. A., p-52.

³. Bhattasali, N. K., Coins and chronology of the Early Independent Sultans of Bengal, p-71.

⁴. H. B., Vol. II., p-118.

vasions on the part of the Assamese were as numerous as the inroads of the Muhammadans into Assam, which had commenced under the successors of Bakhtiyar Khilji. During the reign of Raja Khun Kamata, the Assamese under Sudangpha conquered north-eastern Bengal as far as the Karatoya.¹

Subjugation of Tipam, Aiton and Khamjang territories :

Sudangpha devoted the remaining years of his reign to completing the subjugation of the Tipamia, Khamjang and Aiton tribes, whose chiefs had again refused to pay tribute. It was found that they had received encouragement from the Nara king Surumpha.² The messengers were accordingly sent to the Nara king asking him explanation. Sudangpha warned the rebellious chiefs that he would destroy their countries if they did not pay tribute. On the other hand, Surumpha, after receiving Sudangpha's messenger, also asked these chiefs to surrender to the king of Mungdunshunkham (Assam). Surumpha sent Chaoluban in the company of Tapangmau with the present of a white horse along with embroidered reins and saddle and some furniture to Sudangpha. In 1407, Sudangpha died.³ From this time onwards the Nara kings of Upper Burma very seldom caused trouble to the Ahoms, and appear finally to have dropped their claim to suzerainty.

Estimate :

Among the successors of Sukapha, Sudangpha was one of the very active and energetic kings. He achieved victory in four battles and, at least in one of them, he commanded at the head of the army and received bodily injury. Under him the Ahom supremacy was acknowledged from the Patkai to the river Karatoya in Bengal. He defeated the powerful warriors of Bengal, who were more expert in military tactics. He maintained friendly relations with the Naras of Mungjang. All

¹ J. A. S. B., 1873., p-209.

² No reference in Shan chronicles

³ A. H. B., p-51.

these facts prove that he was as great as a warrior as an administrator. His premature death was a considerable loss to Assam's history. Gunabhiram states that he was prone to pleasure and suggests that this was the cause of his early death.¹ But this is a very late version, and the older *Buranjis* make no reference to Sudangpha's self-indulgence. He appears to have been so energetic a warrior and administrator that the statement cannot be believed.

He built a town at Dhala, but afterwards made his capital at Chargua, on the river Dihing. His accession marks the beginning of the Brahminical influence amongst the Ahoms. He made his capital a colony of the Brahmins and converted the tribal court of the Ahoms into a centre of orthodox Hindu culture. This king founded the 'Singarighar' festival,² which was followed by the later Ahom rulers. According to the *Buranjis*, he was the first Ahom king to strike coins, though none of them are now in existence. He assumed the title of 'Maharaja' and 'Rajrajesvar Chakravarti' a favourite title of almost every great king of ancient and Medieval Hindu India.³

Sujangpha (1407-1422) :

Among the three sons of Sudangpha, Sujangpha ascended the throne in 1407, at the death of his father. Two new nobles, Khenpung and Nangsukham were appointed to the posts of *Buragohain* and *Bargohain* respectively. Nothing of any importance is recorded in any of the *Buranjis* about this reign. Sujangpha died in 1422, leaving four of his sons.⁴

Suphakpha (1422-1439) :

In 1422, Suphakpha succeeded his father Sujangpha. *Bargohain* Nangsukham was replaced by a new chief, Langnim by

¹ Barua, G., A. B., p-91.

² See Glossary,

³ Barua, H. K., A. B., pp-19-20.

⁴ Barua, H. K., A. B., p-20.

name. All the *Buranjis* are unanimous in recording that this reign was also uneventful. Suphakpha ruled for 17 years and died in 1439. ¹

Susenpha (1439–1488) :

Among the two sons of Suphakpha, Susenpha born of a Tipam princess ascended the throne in 1439, at the death of his father. In this reign, the Nagas of Tangshu village revolted. Susenpha marched with an army against the Nagas and a battle was fought in the hill at Banruk. The king himself led his troops in person, and routed the Nagas, but one hundred and forty Ahom soldiers were killed in this battle. The Banrukia *Gohain* and Parvatia *Hazarika*, two leaders of the Ahom army were also killed. Eventually, Susenpha succeeded in defeating all the Nagas of the Tangshu village, and as a result of this the Akhampha Nagas came to the Ahom court with a present of swords as a token of their submission. ²

The most interesting event of this reign, from the point of view of the modern historians, was the occurrence of an eclipse of the Sun. The *Ahom Buranji* ³ and the *Deodhai Assam Buranji* ⁴ state that in lakli Rungshen (1486–87), suddenly the day became as dark as night. The statement is fully in agreement with the records of H. M. Nautical Almanac office. ⁵ This can be used as an important means to fix the chronology and the dates of the Ahom kings, and tends to confirm the accuracy of the *Buranjis*.

From the long duration of this reign, it can be presumed that the period was peaceful and progressive in Assam's history. A ruler of some country to the east of Assam, is said to have sent presents to this king in order to cultivate friendship with him. ⁶ In 1449, Sankardev, the great Vaisnavite reformer

¹ A. H. B., p-52.

² Ibid.

³ A. H. B., p-52. & ⁴ D. A. B., p-13.

⁵ See Appendix, 'A'

⁶ H. A., p-85. Gait gives no reference for his statement.

was born in the family of Kusumbar Bhuyan of the village Bardoba, in the present district of Nowgong. Susenpha died in 1488, after a reign of 49 years. ¹

Suhenpha (1488-1493) :

Suhenpha succeeded his father Susenpha in 1488. A new noble, Tyaokangbanrek by name, was appointed to the post of *Bargohain*. The struggle with the Tangshu Nagas was renewed. At the commencement of the hostilities, the Nagas routed a detachment of the Ahoms and cut off the head of the *Bargohain* who was the leader of the army. Next another noble Nangaranga by name was appointed to the post of *Bargohain* and took the command of the Ahom army. This time the Nagas were totally defeated, and the families of Tangshu, Maupia and Lephera Nagas were captured and brought to the Ahom court. ²

In 1490, war broke out with the Kacharis. Chaophunlung Khampeng commanded the Ahom army and Khrungnangsheng was made the *Neog* (General). The combined Ahom garrison crossed the Dikhau river and encamped at Dampuk. The Kacharis fell there suddenly upon the Ahoms and pressed them hard. As a result 120 Ahom soldiers along with their *Neog* were killed in the battle. At this juncture, Suhenpha himself proceeded with further reinforcements to the battle-field by crossing the Dikhau, and pitched his tent on the bank of the river. He gave a stubborn resistance to the Kacharis, who were making hot pursuit of the retreating Ahoms. At last a treaty was concluded, according to which an Ahom princess was sent to the Kachari king with two elephants and twelve female slaves, and in return the Kachari king ceded his territory up to Marangi to the Ahom king. ³

Dr. R. C. Majumdar states that Alaud-din Husain Shah of Bengal (1493-1519) led an expedition into Assam when it was ruled by Suhenpha. ⁴ He does not mention his source. No

¹ Barua, G., A. B., pp-91-92.

² Barua H. K., A. B., p-21.

³ Barua, G., A. B., p-92.

⁴ Majumdar, R. C., *An Advanced History of India*, London, 1950, p-389

such invasion is recorded in the *Buranjis* or the Muslim chronicles. Husain invaded Kamata and sacked its capital, Kamatapur, in 1498.¹ At that time, between the kingdoms of Kamata king and Sudangpha, was the territory of the Kacharis. After the sack of Kamatapur, a Muslim regime was founded, but its duration was transitory. The Muslims were kept engaged in fighting the Bhuyans, who were trying to reoccupy it, which they actually succeeded in doing in 1505.² So the Muslims could not have advanced beyond Kamata to invade either the Kacharis or the kingdom of Suhenpha. Moreover, Suhenpha's reign ended in 1493, the year in which Husain came to power. The hardships and difficulties encountered by Husain after his accession are well known. It is mentioned in the *Riyaz-us-salatin* that Husain invaded Kamata after his conquest of Orissa.³ So, the statement of Majumdar is incredible. It is only in 1527, that the first Muhammadan invasion of the Ahom kingdom took place.⁴

Suhenpha was assassinated in 1493, by some men of the *Tairuban* clan. They had been punished for stealing paddy from the royal granary, and, in revenge, stabbed the king to death with pointed bamboos, while engaged on repairs in the palace. According to some accounts the murder was instigated by Khenpung *Buragoain*.⁵

Supimpha (1493-1497) :

Suhenpha had three sons, of whom Supimpha became king on the death of his father in 1493. Immediately after his accession, he set himself to trace out and punish his father's murderers. This led to the revolt of Khenpung *Buragohain*, who appears to have been suspected of complicity. He appointed a new noble, Phanlungkhampeng by name, to the post of *Buragohain* by dismissing Khenpung. Another noble called Phrasengmung was made *Bargohain* by this king.⁶

¹ See Chapter VII.

² See Chapter VII.

³ Abdus Salam, pp-132-33, J. A. S. B. 1894, p-179.

⁴ See Chapter V.

⁵ Barua, H. K., A. B., p-21.

⁶ Tam uliphukan, A. B., p-18.

There is a story that one of Supimpha's queens happened to see a Naga chief, who had come to pay tribute, and praised his beauty in presence of the king. The latter was so angry at this that he sent her immediately out of the palace. The queen was pregnant at that time and in due course gave birth to a son who would become *Barpatragohain*, a new officer equal in status and rank with those of *Bargohain* and *Buragohain*, in the next reign. ¹

Though the story of the unfortunate queen, which has an important sequel, may well contain legendary aspects, it gives some indication of a further stage in the evolution of the Ahom state. The influence of the king now has reached to the remote corner of the tribal regions, and people from those areas freely visited the royal court in connection with various purposes, administrative, commercial, diplomatic and cultural. Supimpha died in 1497.

¹ Barua, H. K., A. B., p-22.

CHAPTER V

CLIMACTERIC OF THE EARLY AHOMS

Suhummung (Dihingia Raja): (1497-1539).

In 1497, Suhummung succeeded his father Supimpha. He abandoned the old city of Charaideo, and established a new town at Charguya on the river Dihing with great ceremonials and festivities. On this occasion, he minted coins which are not now available. He established a new capital at Bakata on the Dihing, after building an embankment along the river to prevent the havoc of flood during the rainy season. On account of this construction he was called 'Dihingia Raja.'¹ He had six sons. The eldest, Prince Suklenmung, was made the viceroy of Tipam, the second son, Suleng, was made the 'Saring Raja', the third son, Suteng, was given the governorship of Namrup, the fourth was given the viceroyalty of Dihing, the fifth was in charge of Tungkhang, and the youngest prince, Sukh reng, was kept in the capital without being given any office.² The influence of Hinduism became more evident when this king assumed the title 'Svarga Narayan' and introduced the Saka Era to be used for all official purposes.³

In 1504, the Itania Nagas revolted. Nangaranga Bargohain and Khampeng Buragohain were despatched with a big army against the rebels, who were subdued. A treaty was concluded in which the Nagas acknowledged the supremacy of the Ahom king. They also promised a yearly tribute of axes, gongs and amber. The salt spring at Longpong was surrendered to the Ahoms and the Naga chief gave his daughter in marriage to Suhummung to uphold their mutual relations. Four elephants

¹ Tamuliphukan, K. N., A. B. p-19, Gunabhiram, p-98, & Barua, H. K., pp-23-25.

² D. A. B. p-15 & Barua H. K., A. B., p-25.

³ Tamuliphukan, A. B., p-19.

were given by the Naga chief as dowry for his daughter. A garrison of the Ahom army was kept in the Naga territory, and a Naga chief, Senglung Kanseng by name, was appointed as *Barpatragohain*, a newly created post equal in status to that of *Buragohain*.¹ In 1498, Kamatapur having been sacked by Husain Shah, the local Bhuyans invoked the aid of Suhummung to drive the Muslims. Suhummung's military operations proved successful in putting an end to the Muslim regime implanted at Kamata. In 1505, Suhummung received the Bhuyans with high honour in his court, and thus established cultural intercourse which continued from now onwards on a permanent basis.²

In 1510, Suhummung took a census of his kingdom but we are not told its population. In 1512, the king himself marched with an army to Panbari through Habung and annexed the whole region to his kingdom.³ In 1513, war broke out with the Chutias of Sadiya. The cause of the rivalry is not known. According to the statement of the *Buranjis*, the Chutias seem to have taken the offensive. The Chutia king Dhir Narayan (or Chandra Narayan), marched with an army and a flotilla of boats to the Ahom territory and stationed himself at Dikhaumukh. Kachitara, the minister of the Chutia king, was the commander of the army. Suhummung despatched Sukhreng along with two other generals against the enemies and in a naval encounter at Sirati, the Chutias lost heavily and were compelled to retreat. The Ahom army took possession of Mungkhrang and a slice of the trans-Namdang region. Suhummung ordered a township to be built in the newly acquired territory.⁴

Gait contends that the Chutia king Dhir Narayan, having been defeated in this battle, invoked the aid of the Nara king, who ultimately came up to the border of the Ahom kingdom, and, after a short engagement with the Ahoms, made peace and retreated.⁵ But he is not correct. The alleged invasion of

¹ See Chapter IV. p-86.

² Tamuliphukan, K. N., A. B. p-20.

³ D. A. B., p-15 & A. H. B., p-54.

⁴ D. A. B. pp-15-16.

⁵ H. A. pp-86-87.

the Ahom territory by the Nara king was an aggressive expedition and actually took place in 1524.¹

In 1520, the Chutias again commenced their hostilities. They attacked the fort at Mungkhrang and killed its commander Khenmung, when the whole garrison fled. Suhummung remained passive for the next two years and, in 1522, himself took the leadership of the army and defeated the troops near the mouth of the Sessa river. He pursued the retreating Chutias up to the mouth of the Tiphao river and erected a fort there for the consolidation of the conquered regions. Early in 1523, the Chutia king again took the offensive. He marched with a large army and encamped at Rupa. Then he laid a siege on the Ahom fort on the Tiphao; but met with stubborn resistance. Suhummung hurried to the spot with strong reinforcements and utterly routed the enemies. A message of peace was sent by the Chutia king to Suhummung, but in vain. The Ahom army pursued the Chutias until the latter took shelter in Kaitara hill. For sometime the Ahom soldiers were kept in check by the Chutias by rolling down the big boulders; in the meantime the Chutias regained a convenient position on the Chandan hill. At last, a contingent of Ahom troops was despatched to attack the enemies from the rear. This measure having been undertaken, the Chutias were confined on a mountain slope called Jangmungskham. Their king and his son (or son-in-law) were killed in open battle, and their heads were presented to Suhummung.² The latter fact, points to the continued prevalence of head-hunting among the Ahoms at this period, at least in a modified form. Numerous other examples of the decapitation of slain enemies are given in the chronicles relating to this period. No references to this practice can be found relating to the seventeenth century. We may assume that by this time it had died out owing to the influence of Hinduism.

Suhummung annexed the whole Chutia country, and a new post in the state, known as the 'Sadiya-Khowa Gohain,' was created to administer it. The first appointment was given to one

¹ D. A. B., p-18.

² Barua, J. K., G. B., p-12 & D. A. B. pp-17-18.

Phrasengmung. In order to implant the Ahom flag permanently on the Chutia soil, Suhummung ordered the emigration of three hundred Ahom families to the newly conquered territory. A contingent of three thousand soldiers was mobilised there under the command of the Gohain for future emergencies. The royal family and the Chutia nobles were deported to Pakarguri, while a number of Brahmins and members of the artisan classes were taken from the Chutia territory to the Ahom capital. Having accomplished all these enterprises, Suhummung returned to the capital and performed the 'Rikkhvan ceremony.'

One engagement followed the other. In 1524, the Nara king, Phuklaimung invaded the Ahom territory at the village Baradeunia and killed the frontier troops on guard with their elephants. This king is wrongly described as a Kachari in the *Ahom Buranji*.² The name of the king does not suggest a Kachari, and the places mentioned are not in Kachari country. Therefore, we prefer the evidence of the *Deodhai Assam Buranji* that he was a Nara.³ Suhummung sent three of his generals with a garrison of a thousand infantry and himself followed closely behind them. At a place called Rurum, a short engagement took place in which the invaders were utterly defeated. A treaty was concluded in which the Nara king gave his sister, Nangkhandeng, to Suhummung in marriage. Two horses were sent along with the bride. After a while, Suhummung also sent an Ahom girl, Nangkumpai by name, to the Nara king along with an elephant and furniture as a token of mutual good relations.⁴ In the table of the Nara kings described by N. Elias, the name of the king appears as Sam-Lung-Paw-Maing.⁵

Elias states that the Nara king Chau-Ka-Pha (1493-1520), planned the conquest of Assam, but on his arrival at the border he was offered large presents of cattle and horses by the Ahom king, when he retired peacefully.⁶ But nothing is mentioned

¹ A. H. B., pp-57-58. For Rikkhvan ceremony, See Glossary.

² A. H. B., p-58.

³ D. A. B., p-18-19.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ H. S. p-45.

⁶ Ibid. p-41.

about this in the *Buranjis*. Gait apparently believes that both accounts are the different versions of the same incident. ¹

But we cannot agree with him. He is not correct in the date of the invasion. According to the *Deodhai Assam Buranji*,² it occurred in 1524, and not in 1513, as given by Gait. The Nara king Chau-Ka-Pha's reign ended in 1520.³ So he could not have invaded Assam at a later date. The invasion must have been undertaken by Chau-Ka-Pha's successor Sam-Lung-Paw-Maing (of which the name given in the *Buranji*, Phuklaimung, seems to be a corruption), and the result was the defeat of the Naras with heavy losses.

After subduing a number of Bhuyans on the frontier territory,⁴ Suhummung engaged himself in the internal administration of the kingdom. In 1526, he promoted Mungtao, a Miri soldier, perhaps for his efficiency and loyalty. Another noble named Mungklang was appointed as *Bargohain* and posted at Dihing. Three other soldiers also received promotion. A chief of the royal blood was posted at Tungkhang as *Gohain*.⁵

In December, 1526, Suhummung, along with one of his sons, marched against the Kacharis and ascended the river Dhansiri to Barduar, where some constructions were made to receive reinforcements. Next the king ordered a fort with brick-walls to be built at Marangi. Then Suhummung led an army to Dergaon to join his naval reinforcements. An engagement took place there with the Kacharis, in which a contingent of the Ahoms, consisting of forty soldiers along with their leader, were killed. The Kacharis advanced up to the village Agarkatia. Three Ahom generals marched with their divisions to check the advance of the Kacharis, who were routed with considerable casualties. Next the Kacharis attempted another engagement

¹ H. A pp-86-87.

² D. A. B. p-18.

³ H. S. p-45.

⁴ Bhuyan, S. K., A. B., pp-12-13.

⁵ D. A. B. p-19.

on the fort at Marangi, but met with crushing defeat. One thousand and seven hundred Kachari soldiers were killed in the field of battle while their commander escaped on horse-back.¹

In February, 1527, a fresh rebellion took place in the Chutia country. Mungklang, the *Dihingia Bargohain*, was despatched to reinforce Phrasengmung. Ultimately the rebellion was suppressed, but the *Dihingia Gohain* lost his life at the hands of the rebels. Next Thaomung Bangen was appointed as an additional 'Sadiya-Khowa-gohain' and his jurisdiction was extended from Kangkham to the source of the Luhit. Suleng, the second son of the king, was posted as viceroy over the Dibru region. Kanseng was honoured with a new title 'Tao Senglung'.²

Suhummung hardly could have finished his diplomatic measures by transferring and appointing important officials on the eastern frontier, when his attention was drawn towards the west. In the same year, 1527, the first Muhammadan invasion, mentioned in the *Ahom Buranji* took place. The name of the Muhammadan general is not known, but he is mentioned as 'Bara Ujir' (Chief Minister or Commander-in-chief). This invasion seems to have been a naval raid accompanied by efficient cavalry. Near the river Burai, an engagement between the Ahoms and the Muhammadans occurred, in which the latter had to retreat after a heavy defeat. Forty horses and twenty cannon were captured by the Ahom soldiers. Suhummung, in expectation of further raids of this kind, took some precautionary measures. He himself stopped at Sala and despatched a battalion to take possession of Duimunisila. A fort was erected at the end of the Burai river and a garrison was mobilised at Phulbari.³ This is the earliest reference in the *Buranjis* to cannon; from this time they are often mentioned, and it appears therefore that their use quickly spread among the Ahoms.

In connection with this Muslim invasion, Bhattacharyya says that "Assam was unsuccessfully invaded by Alau-d-din Husain Shah soon after the conquest of Kamarupa, probably

¹ D. A. B., pp-19-20.

² A. H. B., pp-60-61.

³ D. A. B., pp-21-22. & A. H. B., pp-66-68.

in 1493, at least, earlier than 1497 A. D., the first regnal year of the *Dihingia Raja*".¹ He further states that the expedition was led by Ruknu-d-din Rukn Khan, the *Vizier* and general of Alau-d-din Husain Shah.² For the latter he quotes the authority of an inscription dated 918 A. H.—1512 A. D., and commemorating of the construction of a building, discovered at Sylhet.³ We have already suggested the inconsistency of Bhattacharyya's first contention on the authority of the Riyaz-us-Salatin, that Husain Shah invaded Kamata in 1498, after his military engagements in Bihar and Orissa.⁴ In 1493, Husain was heavily engaged with his internal administration, clearing away the legacy of anarchy left by the *Habshi regime*, the fact of which Bhattacharyya does not mention. As to his second contention, we have sufficient in the inscription to show that his presumption is incredible. The inscription records that "this building (has been erected by) Rukn Khan, the conqueror of Hasht Gamhariyan, who being *Wazir* and general for many months at the time of the conquest of Kamru, Kamata, Jaznagar and Urisha, served in the army in several places in the train of the king."⁵ The inscription does not mention anything of Husain's expedition to the Ahom territory, but it only clearly indicates that Rukn Khan was one of the Generals or *Wazirs* of Husain in the campaign against Kamrup or Kamata. He also accompanied Husain in his other military expeditions to Jaznagar and Orissa. It was only in the beginning of the seventeenth century that Kamru or Kamata formed an integral part of the Ahom dominion.⁶ So the *Bara Wazir* or *Bara Ujir* of the *Buranji* and the *Wazir* of the inscription cannot be identical. Moreover, the statement of the inscription that Rukn Khan was a general of Husain in his Orissa and Jaznagar campaigns, shows the improbability of Bhattacharyya's first contention that Husain invaded Assam unsuccessfully in 1493, the year of his accession.

¹ M. N. E. F. P., p-87.

² Ibid. p-86.

³ J. A. S. B., 1922, pp-413.

⁴ See Chapter VII.

⁵ J. A. S. B., 1922, p-413.

⁶ H. A., p-110.

In December, 1529, there were again signs of a rising in the Chutia country. This time the policy of moderation to pacify the rebels by peaceful means gave good results. It appears from the *Buranjis* that Phrasengmung, the *Gohain* himself, was connected with the plot. Ultimately he was produced before the king at the capital, was pardoned on account of his previous service, and was transferred to another post of the administration.¹

In 1531, the Ahom fort at Marangi was reconstructed. Khunkara or Khuntara, the Kachari king, took the news of this very seriously and despatched an army under the leadership of his brother Detcha or Neocha, who was killed by the Ahoms in the field of battle. The Ahoms followed the retreating Kacharis and killed a large number of them. Suhummung himself proceeded up the Dhansiri with a large army and encamped at the junction of the Dayang. A night attack was made on a near by Kachari town (Nika). Then the Ahom soldiers arrived at Dengnut and two divisions of them were sent through both the banks of the Dhansiri. An engagement took place on the river bank in which the Kacharis were defeated and driven to their capital at Dimapur. The Kachari king Khunkara and his brother fled to Mantara or Kakat. A Kachari prince Detsung or Neochung by name was enthroned on the Kachari kingdom as a vassal king. The new king presented his sister in marriage to one of the Ahom princes with numerous gifts and presents.²

As soon as the Kachari struggles were successfully handled, the second phase of the Muhammadan hostilities ensued. One Luipat or Luput advanced up the Brahmaputra with fifty vessels. An engagement took place at Temeni in which the Muslims were defeated, their commandar having escaped on horse-back. The Ahoms reconstructed their forts at Kangaripara and Sala on the river Bharali. The fort at Kangaripara under the command of Senglung *Barpatragohain* was next attacked by

¹ A. H. B., pp-62-64.

² Ibid. pp-64-66 & D. A. B., pp-24-26.

the Mussalmans, who were led at that time by a new general, Bit Malik or Mit Manik. This time also the Muslims met with disastrous defeat, their general met his death on the battle field. Fifty horses and many cannon and guns of the Bengali soldiers were captured by the Ahoms. Suhummung then rewarded the Ahom soldiers according to their service in the last battle. Early in 1532, a new fort was erected at Temeni under the supervision of Senglung.¹

In April, 1532, a Muslim commander, Turbak, encroached upon the Ahom territory with one thousand horses, thirty elephants, many guns and cannon and other weapons. They encamped at Singri opposite to the Ahom fort on the bank of the Brahmaputra. Suhummung sent Suklenmung with a large army to Singri and himself advanced to Sala. Suklenmung became impatient and without enforcing the rear strongly, crossed the Brahmaputra and gave a vigorous battle to the enemies. On this occasion fortune forsook the Ahom general. With an innumerable number of the Ahom infantry, eight of their commanders were killed in battle. Suklenmung himself made a hair-breadth escape with a severe wound. The Ahoms then retreated to Sala, where reinforcements were received and Senglung was made the Commander-in-chief. The Muslims made an advance and encamped at Kaliabar.²

On the assumption that the last Ahom defeat was mainly due to their weakness in naval power, Suhummung ordered a strong navy to be prepared. In June, seven hundred ships were made ready for operation by the Ahoms. This time the Kachari army also joined the Ahoms. In October, the Muslims took up a position at Ghiladhari. In November, Suklenmung recovered from his wound and assumed the command of the Ahom forces at Sala, on which the Muslim soldiers made an attack. They set fire on the houses outside the fort but were routed on a surprise attack by the Ahoms. Next the invaders

¹ A. H. B., pp-66-68 & D. A. B., pp-26-27.

² Ibid. pp-68-69 & Ibid. pp-27-30.

attacked with cavalry and artillery and put the whole Ahom troops into confusion. The elephants in the fore-front having been unable to withstand the enemies, the whole Ahom army was reulsed with considerable loss. In a few subsequent encounters also the Muslims fared well and maintained their advance very cautiously. But in March, 1533, the wheel of fortune turned in favour of the Ahoms. In a naval engagement near Duimunisila, the Ahoms succeeded in gaining a great victory against their enemies. The Muhammandan commanders, Taju and Sangal, were killed, together with a large number of ordinary soldiers. Two thousand and five hundred men of the invaders lost their lives in the Ahom land. They also lost twenty ships and a number of big guns.¹

In the meantime, Husain Khan, another Muslim general, came to reinforce Turbak with six elephants, one hundred horses and one thousand infantry. He mobilised his forces at the mouth of the Dikrai river, while the Ahom army was garrisoned on the opposite side. Both parties waited for a favourable moment for entrenchment. At last the Ahoms took the initiative under the leadership of Senglurg, attacked and defeated their enemies in several engagements. The final defeat of the Mussalmans took place in a battle near the Bharali river. Turbak and Husain Khan met their death in the field of battle, when the Muslim soldiers began to retreat. The Ahom soldiers followed closely on the fugitives as far as the river Karatoya. Twentyeight elephants, eight hundred and fifty horses, a great number of cannon and matchlocks together with other booty were captured by the Ahoms. The Ahom commander constructed a temple and excavated a tank on the point of their last advance with a view to perpetuate the memory of their victory. The heads of Turbak and Husain Khan were entombed on the Charaideo Hill.²

A pillar of stone with an inscription was also erected there by the Ahoms. The inscription was "One who will occupy this country without battle will send his fore-fathers to the hell, he will be broom-beaten by Hari (sweeper), and he will wear

¹ A. H. B. pp-69-70.,

² A. H. B., pp-69-73 & D. A. B., pp-28-32.

mekhala of woman.”¹ During this expedition, the Ahom soldiers constructed a road from Gauhati to the bank of the river Karatoya. At this time, Suhummung sent messengers to Vikram Sen, King of Orissa, and established friendly relations with him. Suhummung also excavated a tank at Puri with the consent of the King of Orissa. Evidently Suhummung appears to have reinforced himself against the Muslim ruler of Bengal through his contact with the powerful Hindu King of Orissa.²

As the above invasions are not mentioned in the Muslim chronicles, Gait contends that these were undertaken not by the Sultan of Bengal but by some local Muhammadan chiefs or freelance of the outlying territory.³ But the quantity of soldiers, arms and ammunition, especially the cannon, give us the idea that the local chiefs could not possess them. We are rather inclined to think that these were undertaken by some powerful Sultan like that of Bengal. The absence of a record of these invasions in the Bengal chronicles may be due to the disinclination of the Muslim chroniclers to record their disastrous defeats.

In 1535, the Nagas of the villages, Malan, Pangkha, Khaokha, Lukna, Taru, Pahuk, Khamleng, Shileng and Shireng joined together and revolted against the *Khamjangia Gohain*. Next the Nagas of Jakhang also joined the rebels. Suhummung despatched some of his generals with their divisions of troops to fight the rebellious Nagas. The *Khamjangia* Nagas were soon overpowered, when they acknowledged the Ahom supremacy by presenting 100 methons. Soon after the whole region was brought to order.⁴

¹ Bhuyan, S. K., *Satsari Assam Buranji*, Gauhati University, 1960, pp-16-17

² Acharyya N. N., *Chaopha Suhummung, the Assamese Napoleon*, The Bulletin of the History Association, Gauhati University, 1962.

³ H. A., p-94.

⁴ A. H. B., pp-73-74 & D. A. B., pp-32-33.

In 1536, the Kachari king Neochung or Detsung showed signs of hostilities. A large army was sent and Suhummung himself accompanied them up to Marangi. Then a portion of the Ahom army was despatched to Banphu through Hamdai. There the whole army was divided to proceed up both the banks of the Dayang river. Some of the Ahom generals ascended the river in ships and besieged the Kachari fort at Banphu. The contingent which marched along the right bank of the river defeated the Kacharis who resisted them, and on the left bank the Ahoms, after receiving reinforcements, inflicted a crushing defeat upon the Kacharis. Detsung, the Kachari Raja, took shelter in the fort at the hill Daimari. He collected a flotilla of boats there and advanced through the Khamdam river. After an engagement with the Ahom naval force on the river Namtima, he fled to Lengnut and thence to Dimapur, his capital. The Ahoms followed the Kacharis up to their capital and captured Detsung's whole family. Detsung himself fled to Jangmara where at last he was caught and beheaded. A gold umbrella, a silver umbrella, a gold sofa, a silver sofa and a considerable quantity of gold and silver were collected by the Ahoms, as spoils of battle. Suhummung annexed the whole Dhansiri valley along with the Kachari possessions up to the Kalang river in the Nowgong district.¹

In December, 1537, the Koch king Visva Singha along with his brother Sib Singha came to the Ahom court and offered valuable presents to Suhummung. In the same year, there was exchange of envoys and gifts between the Manipuri king and the Ahom king. Suhummung is said to have met his death in 1539, as a result of a conspiracy plotted by Suklenmung, his eldest son.²

The reign of Suhummung was one of the most eventful and important reigns of Assam's history. Suhummung was an energetic, enterprising and tactful ruler. During his rule the Ahom supremacy extended to all directions. The Chutias were subdued for good and their country was annexed to the Ahom

¹ A. H. B., pp-73-77 & D. A. B. pp-32-35.

² Ibid. pp-77-78, & Ibid. p-35.

kingdom. Suhummung showed another mark of genius by his thoughtful measure of transfer of population of the Ahoms and the Chutias between their countries. Great credit lies in his selection of a Naga chief as the *Barpatragohain*, one of the highest dignitaries of the Ahom administration. He also deserves appreciation for his moderate and mild policy in handling the Naga affairs. The influence of the Kacharis over the Dhansiri valley was checked by him for ever; and the Kachari capital at Dimapur was sacked by him. He created the post of *Marangikhowa-gohain*, to administer the Dhansiri valley, a post which was to continue up to the end of the Ahom rule. To add to his achievements, it was in the reign of Suhummung that three Muhammadan invasions were successfully resisted and defeated. One Nara campaign was faced victoriously. The powerful Koches under Visva Singha acknowledged the Ahom supremacy.

There was an epoch-making change in the social history of the country at this time. The people were divided into clans and artisans were imported from the Chutia country and elsewhere. The Saka Era was introduced for the first time to replace the system of calculating the dates by the Jovian Cycle of Sixty years.

From the strategic point of view, this reign was most important. Under Suhummung, the Ahoms became the most powerful nation of the whole of north-eastern India. The Ahoms under Suhummung could claim at last victory everywhere in all their engagements.

In the religious history of the country, this reign had an equal importance. Apart from the increasing influence of the Brahminism, it witnessed the spread of the Vaisnava reformation founded by Sankardev.

Economically this reign may be considered as the beginning of a new regime in which increasing wealth and prosperity were bestowed on the ordinary people. A census of the country was taken to improve the efficiency of the administration. The reign of Suhummung thus can be considered as the climacteric of the early Ahoms.

Both as a ruler and a man, Suhummung occupies a distinguished place in the history of India. A born leader of men, he extended Ahom kingdom, by dint of his unusual bravery and diplomacy, from a small kingdom to an Empire and became an irresistible enemy of the mighty Afghans, of Bengal, then at the zenith of their power. The most brilliant of his achievements was his diplomatic marriages with the powerful Kacharis, the Nagas and the Naras of Mungkaung. A born ruler of men, Suhummung was entitled to fame chiefly for his success in effecting the marvellous transformation of the warring Ahom kingdom into a compact national monarchy, though his ideal of re-establishing Hindu Empire over Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa could not be realised owing to the intervention of the powerful Turko-Afghan rulers of Bengal. Though a great conqueror, Suhummung was not stern by nature but, on the other hand, showed kindness and consideration towards his fallen foes. Undaunted bravery, grim tenacity of purpose and ceaseless activity, were some of his prominent qualities. His military campaigns give sufficient proof of his unusual courage and the manner in which he baffled the intrigues of his enemies shows him to have been a past-master of diplomacy and state-craft. A great builder of forts, cities, tanks, temples and embankments, Suhummung possessed high ideals and indefatigable industry. A man of indomitable spirit and remarkable military prowess, he was not ruthless conqueror exulting in needless massacres and wanton destruction. An affectionate father, a kind master, a generous friend, and firm believer in God, Suhummung was an ardent lover of nature and truth and excelled in constructive arts and economic innovations. ¹

¹ Acharyya, N. N., *Chaopha Suhummung, the Assamese Napoleon*, Professor B. K. Barua Commemoration Volume, Gauhati University, 1965.

Suklenmung or Garhgaya Raja (1539-1552).

In 1539, Suklenmung ascended the Ahom throne. He established a new capital at Garhgaon and for this reason is known as the 'Garhgaya Raja.' For the first few years of his reign, he engaged himself in consolidating the administration of the newly acquired Kachari country. The Bhuyans of the Kapili valley seem to have shown signs of hostility towards the Ahom regime. But they were soon brought under the direct rule of the capital.¹

In 1542, there was a Chutia rising, but the most decisive event of this reign was the initiation of a series of hostilities with the Koch king, Nara Narayan. In 1546, a large expedition of the Koches under the leadership of the king's brother and commander-in-chief Chila Rai or Sukladhvaj, advanced along the north bank of the Brahmaputra as far as the Dikrai river, where it was resisted by the Ahoms. A fierce battle took place in which many Ahom generals and ordinary soldiers were killed while fighting the invaders. At last, the Ahom soldiers took a stand at Kharanga and thereafter marched to Kaliabar. In the meantime, reinforcements of the Ahom army arrived at Sala, where again the Koches assumed the initiative. After a long and continuous battle the invaders were overpowered. Some of them fled to the forest, some to the ships, and many leaders lay dead on the battle-field. The routed Koch army retreated along the bank of the Brahmaputra until they reached the border of Kamrup. With the beginning of the new year, the Koches showed again signs of aggression by erecting a fort at Narayanpur. Suklenmung mustered his troops and took up a fortified position along the bank of the Pichla river. The line of communication of the Koches having been cut, they realized that they were in immediate danger and attempted to storm the Ahom fortifications. But they met a reverse and were repulsed with heavy loss, the casualties being large. The Ahoms got possession of a number of horses and weapons of the enemies. This victory enabled the Ahoms to regain their lost territory. Suklenmung returned to the capital and performed a *Rikkhvan* ceremony.²

¹ A. H. B., p-79.

² A. H. B., pp-79-81. & D. A. B., pp-37-38.

In 1549, the Banphia Nagas were attacked by the Banchungias, when the former brought the trouble to the notice of the Ahom king. An expedition was sent against the Banchungia Nagas, who were defeated. A large quantity of booty in buffaloes, methons and coral was captured by the Ahom soldiers, while the leader of the Nagas was made a prisoner. Suklenmung died in 1552.¹

Suklenmung was a brave general. He himself participated and played important role in almost all the battles during his father's reign. He defeated the powerful Koches and conquered rebellious Bhuyans. He was the first Ahom king to mint coins, which are still in existence.² Thus the reign of Suklenmung marks the emergence of a definite numismatic form in the history of Assam.^{2a)} In the reign of Suklenmung, the tank of Garhgaon was excavated and an embankment placed round the capital; the Naga Ali, a high road running from Bar Ali to the Naga hills through the Gadhulibazar mouza, and the embankments at Kahikuchi and Changinimukh were also constructed.³

Sukhampha or Khora Raja (1552-1603).

Sukhampha succeeded his father in 1552. Having hurt a leg while hunting he was called 'the lame king' (Khora Raja).⁴ Soon after his accession, there was a conspiracy in the palace against him by the princes of the royal blood. All of them were captured and confined. But ultimately on the intercession of the nobles of the court they were pardoned.⁵

In 1555, an expedition was sent against the Nagas of Hati-khok, Iton, Papuk and Khamteng. The Ahom soldiers succeeded in defeating the Nagas after a short skirmish. There were few casualties on either side. One hundred methons were captured by the Ahoms as spoils of battle.⁶

¹ A. H. B., p-82.

² Botham, Catalogue of the Prov. Coin Cabinet, Assam, Allahabad 1930, p-452.

^{2a} Das, M. C., A Study on Ahom coins, All India Oriental Conference Souvenir, 1964.

³ Tamuliphukan, A. B., pp-23-24.

⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵ A. H. B., p-82. & D. A. B. p-40.

⁶ Ibid. pp-82-83 & Ibid.

One of the important activities of Sukhampa after his accession was his military help to the Nara King against the Burmese, who had invaded the Nara kingdom. As a reward, he received the hands of the Nara princess in marriage.¹ It is mentioned in the Shan chronicles that in the thirtieth year of the reign of the Nara king, Chau-Sui-Kwei (surnamed Chau-pəng), in 1556, a Burmese army despatched by the king of Henthwadi (Pegu), invaded Mogaung and conquered it. The Nara princess who was married to Sukhampha appears to have been the daughter of Chau-Sui-Kwei.²

In 1559, the forgiven princes rebelled for the second time and were properly punished by execution. In 1560, a Bhuyan, grandson of Pratap Rai, along with Salu Bhuyan and others, invaded the Ahom territory and encamped on the mouth of the Dikhau river. Three generals with their battallions were immediately despatched by the Ahom king to attack the invaders at their halting point. A sortie took place, in which the invaders were defeated and their leaders were slain.³

The precedent of the last invasion alarmed the Ahom king. With a view to check the further aggression from the west, extensive fortifications were made at Boka and Sala and some other places in the frontier region. In 1562, hostilities broke out with the Koches. Tipu or Tepu and Bukutumlung or Bhakatmal two Koch generals, crossed the Ahom frontier with a large army and arrived at Sala. Thence they ascended the Brahmaputra with a flotilla of boats and arrived at Dikhaumukh. A naval battle took place there in which the Koches, though at the first engagement they were forced to retreat to the mouth of river Handia, ultimately succeeded in routing the whole Ahom army. Four Ahom generals lay dead on the battle-field, while one became a prisoner in the hands of the enemy.⁴ It would appear, however, that they did not immediately succeed in advancing further.

¹ Gunabhiram, A. B., p-99.

² Elias, H. S., p-42.

³ A. H. B., pp-83-84. & D. A. B., p-40.

⁴ A. H. B., -84pp-85. & D. A. B., p-41.

In January, 1563, the Koches again ascended the Brahmaputra with a large army as far as the Dikhaumukh. This time Sukladvaj or Chila Rai, the younger brother of king Nara Narayan, took the leadership of the army. After a decisive battle, the Koches were victorious. The Ahom capital at Garhgaon was evacuated. The king and his nobles took shelter at Klangdai in the Naga hill area. The Koches first made their camp at Majuli and thence entered Garhgaon, the capital.¹

After three months a treaty was concluded. The Koches withdrew from the capital when the Ahoms acknowledged the Koch supremacy and the tract up to Narayanpur on the north bank of the Brahmaputra was ceded to the Koch king. A number of sons of the nobles were sent to the Koch capital as hostages. A war indemnity of sixty elephants, sixty pieces of cloth and a large quantity of gold and silver was given to the Koch King.²

In the month of August, the Ahom king returned to his capital. Next he engaged himself in repairing the damage caused by the Koches. Aikhek, the Buragohain, was dismissed on the charge of gross neglect of duty during the last Koch operations. A chief, Kankham, was appointed as the Buragohain and strict injunctions were passed to reorganize the military affairs in such a way that any future invasion should be successfully resisted. A fort was constructed on the bank of the Dikhu river. Next Narayanpur was recovered from the Koches and soon afterwards some military constructions were made at Sala. A bund was constructed at a place called Sina.³

In January, 1564, a section of the discontented Chutias rebelled and raided some territory at Namrup and Kheram. The Governor of Tipam was directed to punish the rebels but his attempts gave no result. Next Rup Handik, the *Buragohain*,

¹ Ibid. pp-86-87: & Ibid pp-41-42.

² Ibid pp-87-88 & Ibid pp-44-45.

³ A. H. B., pp-88-89 & D. A. B., pp-44-45.

was sent with a large force to suppress the rebellion. The *Buragohain* fought with the rebels, defeated them, and captured the leader along with a large number of Chutias.¹

In February, 1564, Paman or Paban, the *Dhekeri* king, who appears to have been a Bhuyan, invaded a portion of frontier territory on the west. He was attacked and defeated at Murabhag on the river Brahmaputra. A great number of the *Dhekeri* soldiers were killed and many fled away. The *Dhekeri* king himself fled on a horse, leaving his elephant, on the back of which he had been fighting, to be captured by the Ahoms. A large number of elephants, horses and guns fell upon the hands of the Ahom soldiers.² This is the first occasion on which the *Buranjis* mention the *Dhekeris*. This is a term generally used for the people of lower Assam. It would seem that at this period the inhabitants of the districts Darrang and Kamrup were also called *Dhekeris*.³

In March, 1564, an expedition was sent against one Bhela Raja, who also appears to be a *Bhuyan*. In a sortie the chief was defeated and captured. In middle of the same year, the Koch general Tepu again ascended the river Brahmaputra and encroached upon the Ahom territory. We have already seen that just after the withdrawal of the Koch army from the Ahom capital, the supremacy of the Koches was challenged. The last remnant of the Koch sovereignty over Ahom territory was lost when Narayanpur on the north bank of the Brahmaputra was recovered from the Koches. Evidently the Koch invasion represented a further attempt to assert Koch suzerainty in the Ahom land. But fortune had left them in the meantime. The whole Koch army was defeated when their leader Tepu was killed in the battle. Some of the Koch soldiers were captured but many fled. After this defeat at the end of the year, Nara Narayan, the Koch king, released all the Ahom hostages in the

¹ Ibid. p 89 & Ibid pp-45-47.

² Ibid p-90 & Ibid p-46.

³ Gunabhiram, A. B., pp-9-10.

Koch court to encourage good relations with Sukhampha.¹ It is popularly believed that Nara Narayan in the course of a game of dice with the hostages offered them their release as a stake. He lost the game and the hostages were sent back accordingly.² There is no need to believe this story. No doubt the defeat of the Koches at the hands of the Ahoms led Nara Naryan to make friends with the Ahom king ; such friendship was no doubt doubly necessary to enable him to resist the Muslim ruler of Gaur. A good number of artisans and skilled labourers accompanied the Ahom hostages on their return to their own country.³

In 1569, an expedition was sent against one Phusenta, who was defeated and fled to Papuk, when his family was captured. In 1571, two Naga chiefs, Pungban and Pungkhru rebelled. A battallion of the Ahom troops was sent, as a result of which the hostile Nagas were subjugated. In 1572, there was a rising of the *Muttaks*, a term used in the *Buranjis* synonymously with the *Morans* or *Moamarias*. On the approach of the Ahom army, their leader fled to Kanchai, where the Ahom soldiers thptured him. Then the Kanchai king along with a great number of the *Muttaks* were captured and produced before the king. In 1573, the *Itania* Nagas revolted. An expedition was sent to Inppress the rebellion. The *Itanias* were routed and the families and their chiefs were made captives. Next the Naga village of ofheram was occupied by the Ahom soldiers.⁴

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It is mentioned in the *Ahom Buranji* that in 1575, the Nara king invaded Ahom territory at Khamjang.⁵ The name of this king is not mentioned. We do not find mention of this invasion in the Nara chronicles. But it is stated that Mogaung *tsaubwa*, Chau-ka-pha II (1564-83), was a very powerful ruler.⁶ We have seen already that the Nara kings, though they had given up their claim to suzerainty over the Ahom throne, could not

¹ A. H. B., pp-90-91 & D. A. B., pp-46-47.

² Barua H. K., A. B.. p-35.

³ Ibid p-35.

⁴ A. H. B., pp-90-92.

⁵ Ibid p-92.

⁶ H. S., p-42.

altogether abandon the tendency to occasional raids into Ahom territory.¹ So it may not be unreasonable to suggest that Chau-ka-pha II was the Nara ruler referred to in the *Buranji* as campaigning against the Ahom king. It is recorded in the *Buranji* that in 1575, on the entrenchment of the Naras near Khamjang, a large Ahom force was mobilised at Pangrao, but soon afterwards a treaty was concluded. According to the treaty, the Nara king gave his sister in marriage to one of the Ahom princes. It is mentioned there that the Nara king received one thousand gold mohurs from the Ahom king.² From the condition of the treaty it appears that the Ahoms must have shown such courage and heroism that the Nara king was inclined to give his sister's hand to the Ahom prince to avoid conflict, though the tribute paid to him shows that he was not defeated. No *Buranji* mentions any actual engagement on this occasion.³ But fighting at last did occur in 1577, after a lapse of two years. This time the Nara king entered the Ahom kingdom through Itan, a disorderly Naga village. The Naras are said to have devastated the provinces of Ruram, Kheram and Namrup. Immediately a large army of Ahoms was sent to resist the invaders. On the right bank of the river Sessa, after long and fierce fighting, the invaders were routed. A great number of the Naras were killed. Their king fled from the battlefield and took shelter on a hill. The Ahom soldiers took possession of many horses, elephants, swords and shields of the invaders.⁴

In 1576, just at the eve of the Nara operations, a fierce horde of Naga tribesmen, under the leadership of one of their chiefs, encroached upon the Ahom territory, killed twenty-six soldiers in a skirmish, and occupied the territory up to Longpong, where there were salt springs. But later on in a treaty they surrendered their absolute right of using the salt springs of the area.⁵

¹ See pp-90-91.

² A. H. B., pp-92-93. & D. A. B., pp-48-49

³ Ibid. Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. Ibid. pp-49-50.

⁵ Dhekialphukan H. R., A. B., pp-55-56.

In 1579, one Nangchanphe alias Tumphe, the son of one Shengkhru entered into the Ahom territory and stopped at Namrup. An army was immediately despatched to resist the raiders. Near Pangrao they were overpowered and routed.¹ We are given no information as to the origin or status of this raider, but his name and the district which he invaded, suggest that he was a Shan.

In 1584, the Koch king Raghu Dev gave his sister Saokala or Sasikala in marriage to Sukhampha in order to cultivate his friendship. Two elephants twelve horses accompanied the Koch princess as her dowry. Soon afterward Sukhampha presented Raghu Dev with twenty-two elephants and sixty horses in return.²

The succeeding nineteen years of Sukhampha's reign are hardly mentioned in the chronicles. We must assume that they saw little or no military activity. The most dangerous potential enemy of the Ahoms, the Koches, were heavily involved in family strifes and dissensions on the one hand and political rivalry with the Muslims of Bengal on the other. Raghu Dev, the eastern Koch king, was no doubt glad to remain at peace with the Ahoms, and his son, Parikshit, retained the Ahom friendship even in the succeeding reign of Pratap Singha, to whom also a Koch princess was given in marriage.³ Sukhampha, now an elderly man, was no doubt content to hold his frontiers and end his reign in peace. It may well be that his forces assisted Raghu Dev in his dogged resistance to his enemies in the western and southern frontiers. Sukhampha, evidently a most energetic and able ruler, maintained the power of the Ahoms, repelled invaders, and raised the importance of his house. It is regrettable that the chronicles tell us next to nothing about the individual character of the Ahom kings. Of Sukhampha the only personal trait recorded is that he was very fond of sport and hunting. But from the achievements of his long reign we must assume that he was a king of great ability and force of character.

¹ A. H. B., pp-93-94.

² Ibid. p-94.

³ Ibid. p. 97.

Sukhampha died in 1603 and was succeeded by his son Pratap Singha, who is referred to regularly by his Hindu name, in preference to his Ahom name Susenpha. The earlier kings had no Hindu titles, but were satisfied to rule with their Ahom names only. Thus the death of Sukhampha marks a further stage in the Hinduization of the Ahoms. Moreover from this time forward the Mughals, strongly entrenched in Bengal, made constant attacks on Ahom territory and largely changed the pattern of the Ahoms' military activity. Thus the death of Sukhampha marks the end of a period in the history of Assam.

CHAPTER VI

AHOM ADMINISTRATION

Hierarchy of Officers :

The Ahom kings devised from the very beginning of their career in Assam an administrative organisation erstwhile unknown in the history of Assam. Their administration consisted of a regular hierarchy of officers in charge of various departments, who, however, did not in any way check their authority, but rather carried out their respective duties according to the former's orders. The kings had a council of friends and trusted officers called the Patra-Mantri, which they consulted when important affairs of State demanded attention. The Councillors might express their opinions, which at times had some influence on the administration ; but these were not binding on the King. While we have a good deal of information about the administration of the Ahoms in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries little is said about the government of the early Ahom Kings in the Buranjis or chronicles which were written from time to time and which contain a careful, reliable and continuous narrative of their rule. We may believe, however, by the early period of their rule the system of Government had already assumed something of the shape it possessed when Assam fell to the British.

The system of Government in its fully developed stage was partly monarchical, partly aristocratic.¹ But as the monarchical element was preponderant it may better be called an oligarchical monarchy. The aristocratic element was represented by the principal officials chosen from a hereditary nobility. The origin of the monarchy must be traced back to the political practices that was prevalent among the people of the Tai race of which the Ahoms were a branch. Since the first century B. C., originally nomadic Tai began to move southwards in southern China and established independent states² which were simple

¹ Bhuyan, S. K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Gauhati, 1949, p-9

² Rajkhowa, S. C., *Ahom Kingship*, *Journal of Assam Research Society*, January and April, 1942, pp-31-32.

patriarchal monarchies.¹ The tradition of monarchy which the Ahoms inherited from their ancestors was further strengthened by the fact of conquest. The very fact that the people were of necessity primarily organised for warfare prompted monarchy rather than other forms of government.

The King :—The king was the virtual head of the State but was assisted by a council of Gohains or great nobles. He was not only the owner of the land but also the master of his subjects. He could grant or sell both. In the early period, the succession to the throne was from father to son but in later days there were irregularities.² Sometimes brothers or distant relatives got preference to the son or near relative. Though many of the kings were no doubt despots, the majority of them were not tyrannical and apparently governed according to traditional precedent. The person of the king was considered sacred.³

The Great Gohains :—Next to the King, there were originally two Gohains, the Buragohain (Senior noble) and the Bargohain (Great noble). In the reign of Suhummung (A. D. 1497-1539) a new post entitled Barpatragohain similar in dignity and power was created. The most competent of the nobles served as the Prime Minister of State, but the rank of all the three was always looked upon as equal. The king was bound by custom to consult the Gohains on all important matters such as war or negotiations with other countries. He was not considered to have been legally enthroned unless they had concurred in proclaiming him the King. The functions of the Gohains were always advisory but the King did not generally disobey their united resolutions. If any of the Gohains was found guilty of serious crime, the King with the approval of the other nobles could sentence him to death. But there are several instances of Kings behaving very leniently to the rebellious Gohains, and they were apparently often so influential that the Kings thought it inadvisable to punish them severely even when they were untrustworthy or inefficient. Three great Gohains do not appear to have had any sharp division of functions, corresponding to the ministers of State in

¹ Barua, G. *Assam Buranji*, Calcutta, 1878, p-285.

² Barua, G. *Assam Buranji*, Calcutta, 1878, p-289.

³ *Ibid.* p-285.

other systems. The office of the three Gohains was the monopoly of three particular families or clans. The appointments ordinarily descended from father to son, but the King could exercise his power in choosing any member of the family. The three Gohains were alone entitled to the use of the appellation Dangaria (Elder).¹ The Buragohain acted as the Prime Minister of the State and conducted the affairs of the Government during the two interregnums, 1376-80 and 1389-1397.²

The Patra-Mantri or The Council of the Five :—In the seventeenth century two posts namely Barbarua and Barphukan were created by the Ahom King Pratap Singha (1603-1641). The first incumbent of the post of Barbarua was Momai Tamuli, the King's uncle. The office of the Barphukan was occupied for the first time by Langi Panisiya who had established himself in fighting against the Muslim invaders.³ In rank and dignity these two officials were next to the Great Gohains. The Barbarua and the Barphukan along with the three great Gohains formed the Council of the Five known usually as Patra-Mantri functioned something like the modern cabinet. The offices of the Barbarua and the Barphukan were not hereditary and the members of the specified families were appointed in these posts. The members of the families from which the three great Gohains were recruited were not eligible for these posts. The principle involved prevented accumulation of too much power in the hands of a single or a group of families. The Barbarua was the Commander of the forces. He also looked after the revenue and judicial administration of the eastern most region. The Barphukan governed as the Viceroy of the tract between Nowgong and Goalpara with his seat of government at Gauhati. The Barphukan occupied a very important position in the administration because he had to conduct the diplomatic functions with Bengal, Bhutan and the other frontier countries. Though the Barbarua and the Barphukan were above some of the Gohains in rank, they were not generally given this title.⁴

¹ Dhekial Phukan, H. R., *Assam Buranji*, Calcutta, 1829, pp-18-29.

² Barua, G. C., A. H. B., Calcutta, 1930, p-49.

³ Ibid. p-110.

⁴ Barua, G., A. B., Calcutta, 1878, pp-285-86.

To each of these councillors was assigned a certain number of paiks or individuals over whom no other officers of the government had any control. At the time of war or in connection with the works of public utility these paiks rendered service for their masters.¹

The Subordinate Gohains or the Local Governors :—There was a number of local governors who were next in power to the five Councillors. The post of Sadiya-Khowa Gohain was created by the Ahom King Suhummung (1497-1539). Sadiya was the capital of the Chutia Kings. In 1523, Suhummung annexed the whole Chutia territory to the Ahom Kingdom and entrusted it under the supervision of a Gohain. Since the Gohain was posted at Sadiya he was called the Sadiya-Khowa Gohain. The post of Marangi-Khowa Gohain was also created by Suhummung. Marangi was an outpost of the Ahoms in the lower part of the Dhansiri Valley. In 1536, Suhummung annexed the whole Kachari territory west of the Dhansiri bordering the Naga Hills and entrusted the region under a Gohain who was called Marangi-Khowa Gohain. There was a Solal Gohain who administered a great part of Nowgong and a portion of Charduar. The functions and the responsibilities of these Gohains were confined to the provinces of which they were the Governors. At Kajali-mukh, there was a Gohain called Kajali-mukhia Gohain. His functions and responsibilities were identical with those of other Governors of the provinces.²

The Phukans or the nobles :—Below the Gohains in rank there was a class of nobles known as Phukans. The first six were called Chara (the King's private apartment) Phukans. Of these six officials four had special responsibilities. The Nao-baicha Phukan was the head of the royal navy. The Bhitaraual Phukan used to supervise the household affairs. The Dihingia Phukan was posted on the river Dihing. The Pani Phukan

Barpujari, H.K., Assam in the days of the Company, Gauhati, 1964.p.24.

² Dhekial Phukan, H.R., Assam Buranji, pp.18-20

was in charge of the waterways. There were two other phukans called Na-Phukan (new phukan) and Deka Phukan (junior phukan). These two had no special duties. All the six Phukans were under the direct supervision of the Barbarua.¹

The Rajkhowas or the subordinate Governors :—There were twelve Rajkhowas (governors) in the twelve different provinces of the Kingdom. Their functions and responsibilities were confined to the administration of the provinces under their control, and each was provided with three thousand paiks (individuals). The Rajkhowas were assisted by one Phukan and one Barua in every province.²

Ordinary Phukans or Subordinate nobles :—There were some ordinary Phukans entrusted with particular duties. The Parvatiya Phukan, the Raidangiya Phukan, and the Khangiya Phukan were engaged in the services of the Queen, the Queen-mother and the princesses. The Tamuli Phukan was the supervisor of the royal garden. The Naosaliya Phukan was in charge of the construction and repair of the Royal Navy. The Choldhara Phukan was in charge of the Royal robes and garments. The Chiring Phukan supervised the Deodhais and the Bailungs (Royal Priestests). The Devaliya Phukan was in charge of the temples and religious places. The Jalbhari Phukan was in charge of the men employed in supervising the royal nets. The Kharghariya Phukan was in charge of arms and ammunitions.³

The Baruas or the Civilians :—There were some Baruas allotted with particular departments. The treasurer was called Barbandar Barua or Bharali Barua. The Bejbarua was the palace Physician and Changmai Barua was the head of the royal Kitchen.⁴ The Likhakar Barua was the superintendent of the scribes engaged in writing the Buranjis. The Gandhiya Barua was in charge of the Buranjis, records, letters, despatches, and maps preserved in a set of apartments maintained in the Palace.⁵

¹ Dhekial Phukan, Assam Buranji, pp 20-21.

² Barua, G., Assam Buranji, pp286-87.

³ —Ibid—

pp.286-87.

⁴ —Ibid—

pp.286-87.

⁵ Bhuyan, S.K., Studies in the Literature of Assam, pp.9-10.

Lower grade Officers :—Four types of lower grade officers mentioned in the chronicles were Katakai (ambassador), Kakati (accountant) Khaund (trader) and the Bairagi (roving ambassador). The function of the Katakai was to maintain contact with foreign countries. The Kakatis were the accountants of the production and expenditure of the royal farms. The function of the Khaunds was to import foreign goods for the court. The function of the Bairagis was to observe the political and social condition of the people in foreign countries. There were also scholars and astrologers in the Court.¹

The officials of the State were not entitled to a monthly or yearly salary. Under each of them was a district or subdivision, from the income of which they used to receive a certain percentage which is not specified in our sources. They were supplied with Paiks or individuals for service. The Viceroy of the district could appoint and dismiss the petty officials under him.²

Military System:

The Ahoms established an independent kingdom of their own in an unknown land testifies to their superb quality of Army organisation and military invincibility.³ The Ahom rule in Assam continued from the beginning of the thirteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century, for a period of more than six hundred years, during which Assam was invaded by the Turks and the Mughals from the west and the Naras from the east. The Ahom rulers courageously resisted most of these invasions and succeeded in maintaining Assam's independence.⁴ This was by no means an achievement of mean order and necessitated maintenance of a well disciplined and properly equipped army. We can get an idea of the invincibility of Ahom army from the statement of no other a person than the Mughal Lieutenant Rashid Khan himself: "The enemy is

¹ Barua, G., Assam Buranji. p.288.

² —Ibid— p.288.

³ Gait, E.A., A History of Assam, Calcutta, 1926, pp.70-71

⁴ Bhuyan, S.K., Anglo-Assamese Relations, Gauhati, 1949, pp.3-5

beyond the reach of our heavy artillery ; and there is no opportunity for fighting with arrows and guns. Their ministers, commanders and infantry are all to be admired for having constructed such an impregnable wall of defence".¹

Sukapha conquered all the countries on the way from Upper Burma to the eastern border of Upper Assam and appointed his nobles to rule over these regions.² The principle which governed the administrative system of the Ahoms was the right of joint conquest which ensures equal share of booty by the leader, his commanders and camp-followers.³ Hence it is but natural that development of Ahom polity should be along military lines, and military spirit seems to have influenced the entire system of Ahom administration.

Within Assam Sukapha undertook a series of campaigns to the countries of the Chutias, the Morans, the Borahis, the Nagas and the Kacharis.⁴ The policy of incessant warfare against the hardy hill-neighbours on the north, the south and the east also speaks highly of the efficiency of the Ahom military organisation. The original strength of the Ahom army was in later day enhanced by means of forced capture and new recruitment. This vast army was not of the nature of a militia or citizens' army but a regular standing army in receipt of due remuneration paid by the king who required little amount in money to pay, all being remunerated either in land or labour.⁵

Besides the vast regiments of standing army under the command of various officers the Ahoms in their wars and conquests, and in their task of guarding the frontiers requisitioned the services of feudal militia. The contingents supplied by the Bhuyans and the other chiefs which fought on behalf of the

¹ Quoted by Dr. S.K. Bhuyan in his *Atan Buragohain and his times*, Gauhati, 1957, p.57

² Barua, G.C., *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, p.47

³ Bhuyan, S.K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Gauhati, 1949, p.7

⁴ Barpujari, H.K, *Assam in the Days of the Company*, Gauhati, 1964, pp.5-6

⁵ *Ibid* p.25

overlord, acted possibly on the basis of feudal obligation. On account of the close resemblance between the system of Ahom feudal militia and the Mughal mansabdari system it is likely for the Ahoms to have obtained the original idea from the Mughals with whom they maintained political contact.¹

- In the earlier stages the Ahom king was the supreme authority as regard to the various war measures. But in course of time as a result of the growth of the state new officers with military duties were appointed. The officers were consulted when war was declared and peace was concluded.² A host of officers, great and small, the Gohains, the Phukans and the Baruas held charge of small provincial areas of strategic importance e.g., the Sadiya-khowa gohain (Governor of Sadiya), the Kajali-mukhia gohain (Noble in charge of the lower valley of the river Kajali) the Marangi-Khowa gohain (Noble in charge of the lower valley of the Dhansiri). The Baruas held charge of departments like transport, provision etc., but some of the Baruas were entrusted with important military functions also. The Rajkhowas who were generally entrusted with civil duties performed military functions as well.

There were also officers such as the Hati Barua (Officer in charge of the elephant force), the Ghora Barua (Officer in charge of the cavalry), the Nao-saliya Phukan (Officer in charge of the navy), and the Khaigharia Phukan (Officer in charge of the artillery), who were exclusively in charge of the various branches of the army. Thus we find there was no hard and fast line of distinction between the civil and the military functionaries and as such the Buragohain, Bargohain, Barbarua, Barphukan and others were frequently found commanding army in the battle.³ This intermixture between two types of functions, one of which needed technical skill and special training, not only resulted to maladministration but was also greatly detrimental to the military efficiency of Medieval Assam.⁴

¹ Bhuyan, S.K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Gauhati, 1949, p 11

² *Ibid* p.7.

³ Borah, M.I., *Baharistan-i-ghaybi*, Vol.11, Gauhati, 1936, pp.487-88!

⁴ Barpujari, H.K., *Assam in the days of the Company*, Gauhati, 1964, pp 4-5

The full complement of an Ahom army comprises— Infantry, Cavalry, Elephants, Navy, Artillery, and Spies.¹

The importance of Ahom infantry has repeatedly been stressed in the local chronicles. The reason appears to be the existence of numerous hills and valleys in Assam. One point of the infantry's superiority to the other arms of the military is that the infantry is capable of taking up arms and of military exercises on all kinds of soils, hill or plain, and in all weathers, dry or wet. The great technical skill and general excellence of the Ahom foot-soldiers is unanimously testified to by the Persian writers. It is mentioned in the *Fathiyah-i-ibryah* that "a very small number of their soldiers often checkmate thousands in battle."² The *Alamgirnamah* goes so far as to say that "one of them was more than a match for ten Muslim soldiers."³ We learn from the *Baharistan-i-ghaybi* that the number of the Ahom infantry in the first half of the seventeenth century in one particular operation exceeded two hundred thousand.⁴

There was a regular system of gradation of officers in the Ahom army. The paiks (lowest military unit) were supervised by the Borahs, the Saikias, and the Hazarikas who were commanded by the higher military officials such as the Baruas, the Rajkhowas and the Phukans. Ordinarily the Phukans were the commanders of 6000, the Rajkhowas 3000, the Baruas 2000, the Hazarikas 1000, and the Borahs of 20 ; but in actual practice, exact numbers were hardly to be found under each command.⁵

The importance of the cavalry in Ahom army can be realised from the fact that the original army of Prince Sukapha included 300 horses.⁶ The Ahoms were in the habit of importing in

¹ Borah, M. I., *Baharistan-i-ghaybi*, vol.11, Gauhati, 1936, pp.489-91

² Talish Shihabuddin, *Fathiyah-i-ibryah* (Journal of the Bihar & Orissa Research Society, vol.1, 1915, p.192

³ Quoted by S. N. Bhattacharyya in his *A History of Mughal North-East Frontier Policy*, Cal. 1929, p.36

⁴ Borah, M. I., *Baharistan-i-ghaybi*, Vol.11, Gauhati, 1936, p.488

⁵ Barpujari, H. K., *Assam in the days of the Company*, Gauhati, 1964, p.2

⁶ Barua, G. C., *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, p.47

large number the horses from Bhutan.¹ The special work of Ahom cavalry in battle was the supervision of the discipline of the army, lengthening its line, protection of its sides, first attack, turning the movement of the army, pursuit and the like. Horses were so necessary and important for Ahom army that there was a department of Government to look after their recruitment and proper training. The superintendent of the department of horses who was called Ghora Barua had to keep a register of horses. He classified them according to their breed, age, colour and size. It was also his duty to provide for their stabling, to fix their diets, to arrange for their training and the treatment of their disease by veterinary surgeons. It was also the duty of Ghora Barua to lead the Ahom cavalry in Battle.²

In the hills and forests of Assam the elephant force was of great importance for Ahom army. The Ahom power that was bent on tireless conquest and expansion had to depend much on elephants which were useful for marching in the front, for operation at a place where there was no roads, protecting the flanks, crossing the rivers, penetrating into places rendered inaccessible by bushes and shrubs, trampling down the enemy forces, giving an imposing appearance to the army, destruction of ramparts, gates, towers, and the rooms over them and carrying treasure. For these reasons Prince Sukapha's army was led by a group of elephants.³ The training and efficiency of elephants as a fighting force were looked after by a special branch of the war office. The department was presided over by an official called Hati Barua assisted by a regular staff of subordinate officers who attended to the manifold duties and operations necessary for rearing up of an adequate elephant force for the state.⁴

Assam is a land of numerous rivers. The great river Brahmaputra runs through the heart of the country, an extensive tract of territory being on either side. The whole land is watered

¹ Bhattacharyya, S. N., *A History of Mughal North-East Frontier Policy*, Calcutta, 1929, p.36

² Bhuyan, S. K., *Atan Buragohain and His times*, Gauhati, 1957, pp.64-65

³ Barua, G. C., *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, p.47

⁴ Borah, M. I., *Baharistan-i-ghaybi*, Vol.II, Gauhati, 1936, pp.489-90

by the Life-giving Brahmaputra, which is the chief artery and high-way of Assam. In such a country the importance of navy can never be over-estimated. The Ahom army was noted for its possession of vast naval power. The Fathiyah-i-ibryah gives the number of ships possessed by the Ahom king at the time of Mir Zumla's invasion of Assam as 32000. The main war-boats were called bacharis. In shape these resembled the kosas of Bengal, and each could carry 70 to 80 men. They were durable and strong and many of them were mounted with guns and cannon. These were made of chambal wood and thus were light. They were speedy and not easily sinkable.¹ It was the duty of the Ahom navy to pursue and destroy piratical boats and ships as well as those came from enemy's country. The Ahom admiralty in fact policed the rivers. They had to collect all tolls levied at ferries, harbour dues and custom duties. The Ahom Admiralty was the portfolio of an officer called Naosaiya Phukan who had to deal with all the matters relating to war.²

The frequent references to the fire-arms in the Buranjis give us the idea that the use of incendiary weapons was known to the Ahoms from the very beginning of their career in Assam. But fire-arms, in a large scale, were used in the early part of the sixteenth century. The Ahom troops soon became expert in making various kinds of guns, small and big, match-locks, artillery and big cannon. There was a department of Government to look after the manufacture of fire-arms and gun-powder under the supervision of an officer called Kharghariya Phukan.³

The appointment of spies in times of peace and war was a regular practice of the Ahom army. Spies formed an essential instrument of Ahom power whose existence was based on military capability.⁴

¹ Talish Shihabuddin, Fathiyah-i-ibryah (Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1872, p.81)

² Bhuyan, S. K., Atan Buragohain and His times, Gauhati, 1957, pp.63-64

³ Talish Shihabuddin, Fathiyah-i-ibryah (Journal of the Bihar & Orissa Research Society, 1915, p.192)

⁴ Bhuyan, S. K., Atan Buragohain and His times, Gauhati, 1957, pp.72-73

The main weapons of war were swords, spears, axes, maces, daggers, slings, bows and arrows. Ahom soldiers were trained to stand firm on the battle-field. Besides their numerical strength, physical vigour, courage and endurance of the Ahoms were some of the decisive factors for military superiority.¹

The strict discipline observed in the Ahom Army organisation can be known from the Persian Historian Shihabuddin Talish who informs us that the soldiers are beheaded for any charge in the battle-field.²

Buranjis tell us that the construction of roads was one of the primary duties of the Ahom rulers. The Ahom administration which was a highly organised one paid sufficient attention to the construction and maintenance of public roads for civil and military purposes. For armed resistance a large number of forts were erected at strategic centres (Ghoraghat, Jogighopa, North Gauhati, Singri and Chamdhara in the North Bank, and Lakhugarh, Kaliabor, Simalgarh, Kajalimukh and Pandu in the South Bank). All these were generally situated on the bank of a river or at the foot or by the side of a hill or hills and in most cases well-fortified. From their detailed descriptions, the Ahom cities and forts appear to be defended both by art and nature. Sukapha selected the site of his capital at Charaideo Hill because of its strategic importance of having been situated on a high hill.³ In describing the workmanship of an Ahom city, the Persian Historian Shihabuddin Talish says that "My pen fails to describe in detail the other arts and rare inventions employed in decorating the wood-work. Probably nowhere in the World can wooden houses be built with such decoration and figure-carving as by the people of this country."⁴

- ¹ Talish Shihabuddin, *Fathiyah-i-ibryah*, (Journal of the Bihar & Orissa Research Society, 1915, p.192)
- ² Talish, S., *Fathiyah-i-ibryah* (Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, vol.1., 1915, p.184)
- ³ Gait, E. A. *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1926, p.78
- ⁴ Talish Shihabuddin, *Fathiyah-i-ibryah* (Journal of Bihar & Orissa Research Society, 1915, p.193),

The most pleasing feature of Ahom military organisation was the existence of the Red Cross Service. Physicians who were called Bez Baruas accompanied by assistants formed part of the army. These medical men were provided with medicines and surgical instruments. They were to stand behind encouraging the fighting men. There were veterinary surgeons also. They had not only to treat the diseases of the horses, elephants, and other animals but also to see that the physical growth of them was harmonious.¹

Land Tenure :

From early times, the village in Assam has been the backbone of the economic life of the people and as such the people lived a rural life with cultivation as their main occupation. The cultivated area of the vast plains, the valleys and hill-slopes of Assam has been created in the course of a great struggle against Nature, which the Assamese cultivator has carried on for centuries together. The soil of Assam is exceedingly fertile and well-adapted to all kinds of agricultural purposes. The Persian chroniclers are unanimous regarding the richness of the soil of Assam, which is greatly due to the annual inundation of the Brahmaputra. Such a productive soil cannot but yield abundant vegetation and as such Assam has always been rich in its plant and vegetable resources.²

The important land tenure systems of the ancient Assam were undone in the period of confusion and disorders following the reigns of Pala line of rulers. During one hundred years from the early part of the twelfth to the early part of the thirteenth century, the political unity of Assam was lost. But the old machinery of Government and the time-honoured customs and procedures must have been inherited by the Ahoms, who after a long period of contests with their adversaries, restored the lost political unity of Assam.³ On their arrival to Assam, the Ahoms

¹ Barua, G., Assam Buranji, Calcutta, 1878, pp.286-87

² Talish Shahabuddin, Fathiyah-i-ibryah, J. B. O. R. S., 1915, p-186

³ H. C. P. A., p-277

found three kinds of land in the country such as Kshetra (arable land), Khila (waste land) and Vastu (building sites). There were also both collective and individual ownership of land. Arable lands were held individually but waste lands, forests etc., were held in common, sometimes by the whole village.¹

The proprietorship of land under the Ahoms was generally vested with the king alone but persons other than king also laid claim to a right upon land that in name was called ownership. The king needed land because he must have resources with which to remunerate those who helped him in his task of defence and administration. For this purpose large tracts of land had of necessity to be left in the hands of the aristocratic heads, who were not interfered with in ruling their ancestral territories so long as they sent tributes and presents to the royal court. The nobility exercised a predominant influence in the state as generals, administrators and sometimes as king-makers. But it was not a hereditary, homogeneous and well-organised body, and to curb the power of the nobles, the Ahom kings tried to regulate the tenure of lands in the different parts of the country on condition of military service.

The basis of the land tenure in Medieval Assam was the khel system which meant the liability of every adult male to work for the interest of the state for three to four months in the year, in lieu of revenue on a limited quantity of land. Each individual tenant was styled poa-paik and was allowed two puras (nearly three acres) of land. Three to four paiks were collectively called got-paik and were liable to render service during the year in rotation. One member of each got was obliged to be present, in rotation, for state-service, and, during his absence from home, the other members were expected to cultivate his land and keep him supplied with food and other articles of daily use. The paiks were also given land for their house and garden, for which they paid a nominal house tax. Anyone clearing land, other than the above, was allowed to hold it on the payment of certain

¹ Ibid, p-298

amount of revenue which is not clearly specified in our sources. He used to enjoy the fresh land so long as it was not required, on a new census taking place, to provide the paiks with their proper allotments.¹

In the inundated areas of the country the land was cultivated chiefly by emigrating ryots who paid a plough tax. The hill tribes who grew cotton, paid a hoe tax. Artisans, smiths, weavers, oil-pressers, fishermen, gold-gatherers, brass-workers etc., enjoyed their portion of land for their home-stead and farm free of tax and without any liability to personal service on condition of regularly supplying to the royal household and public store-houses certain quantities of the articles produced by them. The rice lands were redistributed from time to time, but not the home-steads, which descended from father to son. The only other lands which could be regarded as private property were the estates granted to the nobles. The nobles or the members of the Abhijatya classes were entitled in principle to hold two to three puras of land, for which they used to pay a tax called Gadhan (body-tax), which was in place of military service ; in practice many members of the Abhijatya classes possessed much larger holdings. These members were exempted in perpetuity from the payment of any kinds of taxes except the Gadhan or the House-tax. The land not held by the paiks or the members of the nobility was called Ubarmati. This was looked on as royal property and generally farmed by tenants-at-will, who paid heavier dues than the other classes.²

A standard system of land tenure was known to the Ahoms. The chief feature of this system was proper survey and measurement of land. The Ahom kings granted lands to temples, religious institutions and pious and meritorious persons. These lands were originally known as the half-revenue paying estates but in course of time these were held revenue-free, and the owners called themselves Lakhirajdars, denoting total exemption from payment of revenue. There was also land given to the Brahmins

¹ Barua, G., A. B., Calcutta, 1876, p-288

² Dhékialphukan, H., A. B., Calcutta, 1829, chap. II, pp-1-6

³ Bhattacharjee, S., Inscriptions of Ahom kings, Journal of Indian History, April, 1954, p-55

by the king, which paid revenue at a lower rate than the Ubar-mati. This type of land was known as the Bamunbhalmanubia-jama. The Lakhiraj lands were classified under several heads—Dabattar lands granted for the maintenance of temples, Brahmattar lands for that of the Brahmins, Dharmattar lands donated for that of religious and charitable purposes, such as for reading the Bhagavat, performing the Nama-kirtan (religious music and recital) and supplying food to the pilgrims, and Nankar lands granted to the Sudras of religious order.¹

Land in Assam was tenured not on the basis of payment of revenue but on the basis of the paik system which ensured regular supplying of the labour to the state. In every house one man out of three or four has to render service to the king. Thus in Medieval Assam the subjects were equally the property of the state and therefore not only the houses and the lands but the cultivators were also assessed.

Law and Justice :

Justice was one of the chief aims of Ahom Administration. The rulers regarded speedy administration of justice as one of their important duties, and their officers did not enjoy any special protection in this respect under anything like administrative law. Resort was taken to oaths and ordeals for which the tribes of Assam have been noted. Nature of punishment was much the same as in other parts of India, ranging from reproof and fines to execution.

In the early period the Ahoms followed their original customs and tradition as the law of the land. The king wielded the rod of punishment (Danda), and was not subjected to it. He was the enforcer of Law and arbitrator in the disputes of his subjects. He was also assisted by assessors and others. In his absence, he could delegate his jurisdiction to other royal officers. The customary law and the discretion of the judges formed the criterion of justice.²

¹ Dhekialphukan, H., A. B., Calcutta, 1829, chap. III, pp-9-14

² H. C. P. A., pp-306-07

After the Hinduisation of the Ahoms from about the beginning of the sixteenth century, Hindu law as expounded by the Brahmins seems to have been generally followed. Among the crimes enumerated or otherwise recognised were, theft, robbery, adultery, abduction, the killing of man, and treachery punishable by death. Petty offences in the village seem to have been left to the village judge for disposal. Money was paid for killing a man as compensation to his relatives. For evidence, eye-witnesses were more important than informers. Ordeals were also looked upon as valid tests of innocence or guilt. Truth has the power of saving a man even from death. The punishments for offence were rather severe. In the cases of serious offence punishment like amputation, mutilation and death were inflicted ; in milder cases, binding to post and whipping sufficed as punishment.¹

Ahom administration of justice was the responsibility of the King himself but he was assisted by high officials at the centre or in the provinces. Judges at the head quarters of a province or district had apparently the assistance of the official and nobles of the locality, representatives of the commercial and official classes. In villages, justice was administered by royal officials with the help of the members of the village council or assembly. In certain cases the assembly alone sat in judgement and passed sentence. Special courts of self-governing guilds (Khels and Mels) are also referred to in the Buranjis.

There was no fixed or written law. In the first instance the accused were produced before the King who heard the prosecution and the defence and, after consulting legal opinion, gave his decision. In certain cases the sovereign would authorise an important person to make proper enquiry and to report. The joint family system was in existence, but amongst all except the highest dignitaries, the family usually separated, on the

¹ Barua, G., A. B., pp.-284-85

² Ibid.

death of the father if considered convenient. The sons inherited equal share of the paternal property to the exclusion of daughters. Copper plates were used as a means of registration. Witnesses were duly examined and evidences were maintained in the form of record.¹

The criminal Law was excessively severe. In the case of offences against the person, the principle followed was "Eye for eye and tooth for tooth," and the offender was punished usually with the same injury as that he inflicted on the complainant. The punishment for rebellion or any other anti-state activities was various types of capital punishment, such as starvation, flaying alive, impaling and hanging. The death sentence was often passed, not only on the rebel himself, but also extended to the important members of his family.²

The chief judicial authorities of the state were the Barbarua and the Barphukan, in their own administrative jurisdictions, and trials were conducted before them or their subordinates. An appeal could be made to the Barbaruah or the Barphukan in case the trials were conducted by their subordinates. In the latter cases, a second appeal lay to the sovereign. As the highest authority of the appeal, the sovereign was assisted by the Nyaya-Khoda-Phukan. There were a number of assessors (Kakatis and Pandits) attached to every court of justice, whose opinions were regularly consulted before any clear decision was taken by the president of a court. The social distinction of the class and caste system were guaranteed by the state. The administration of justice appears to have been efficient, speedy and impartial.³

¹ Debkiaphukan, H., A. B., Chap. II, pp-10-12

² Ibid. pp-12-14

³ Barua, G., A. B., pp-286-89

APPENDIX—"A"

The letter confirming the date of an eclipse mentioned in the Buranji :

Telephone :
Herstmonceux 3171
Ext. 25.

H. M. Nautical Almanac Office,
Royal Greenwich Observatory,
Herstmonceux Castle,
Nr. Hailsham, Sussex.
8th February, 1956.

N. N. Acharyya, Esq.,
5 Glenloch Road,
LONDON, N. W. 3.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter of February 6th, addressed to Mr. Sadler, I regret that we are unable to give you any information about earthquakes in Assam in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. I can, however, state that there was a partial eclipse of the Sun on 1486 March 6, of which the maximum phase occurred shortly before local midday. The exact time for the centre of eclipse, quoted by Oppolzer, was 5h 36 m U.T.

With regard to the matter of earthquakes, I would suggest that you might be able to get some information from either Dr. B. C. Browne at Trinity College, Cambridge, or Brigadier G. Bomford at Brasenose College, Oxford ; but I am not sure whether the records available in either place will be sufficient to give you the exact dates on which the earthquakes occurred.

Yours faithfully,

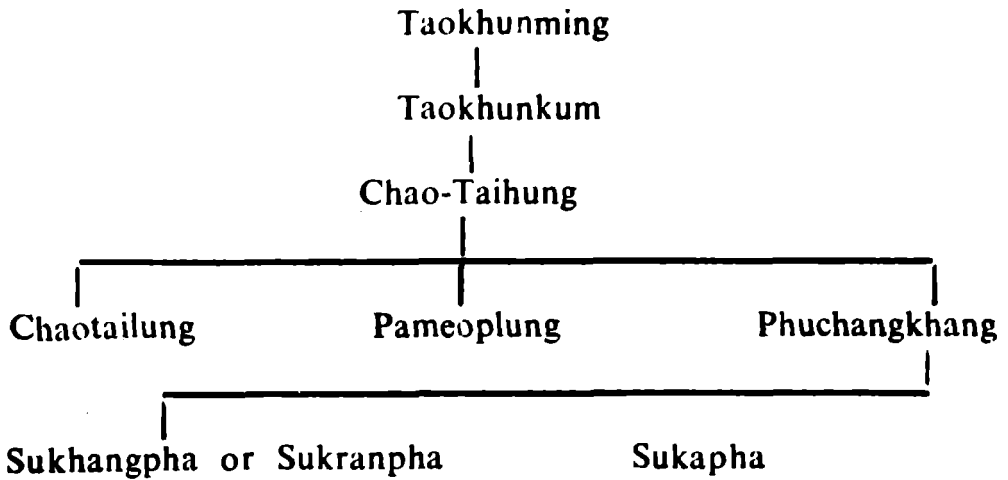
H. W. P. R.

Sd. Harold W. M. Richards
for Superintendent

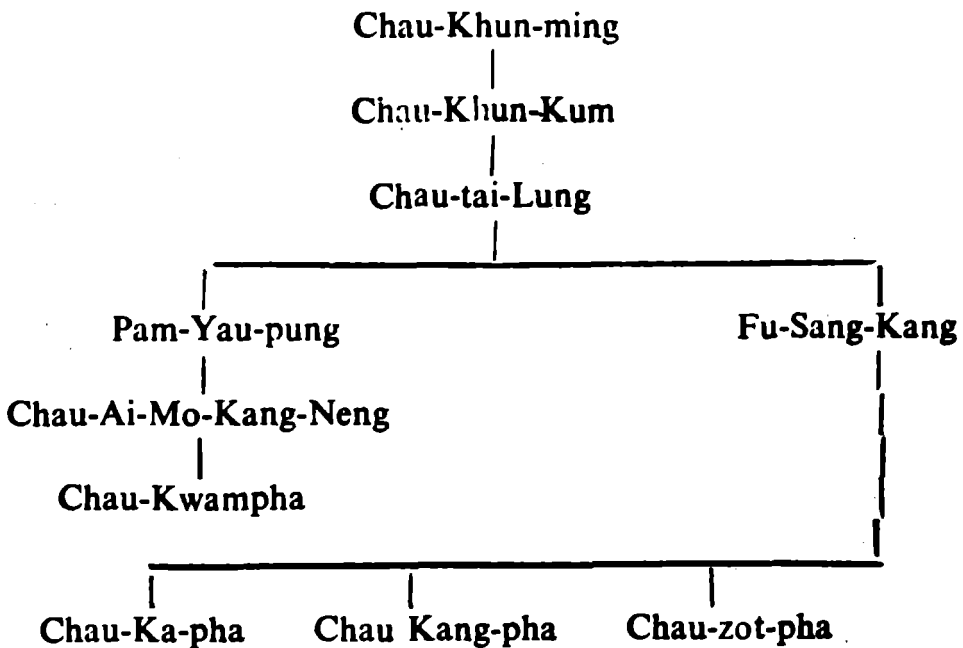
APPENDIX—“B”

Immediate ancestors of Sukapha of Ahom chronicles and Chaukapha of the Shan tradition compared :

1. Ahom Chronicle :¹



2. Shan tradition.²



¹ A. H. B., p-24.

² H. S., pp-26-27 & p. 52

APPENDIX—“C”
Chronology of Ahom Kings.

List of rulers	Reign	
	Com- menced.	Ended.
1. Sukapha	1228	1268
2. Suteupha	1268	1281
3. Subinpha	1281	1293
4. Sukhangpha	1293	1332
5. Sukhrangpha	1332	1364
6. Sutupha	1364	1376
<i>Interregnum</i>	1376	1380
7. Tyaokhamti	1380	1389
<i>Interregnum</i>	1389	1397
8. Sudangpha	1397	1407
9. Sujangpha	1407	1422
10. Suphakpha	1422	1439
11. Susenpha	1439	1488
12. Suhenpha	1488	1493
13. Supimpha	1493	1497
14. Suhummung or the Dihingia Raja ..	1497	1539
15. Suklenmung or Garh gaya Raja (Deka)	1539	1552
16. Sukhampha or Khora Raja	1552	1603
17. Susengpha or Burha Raja or Pratap Singha	1603	1641
18. Surampha or Bhaga Raja	1641	1644
19. Sutyinpha or Nariya Raja	1644	1648
20. Sutamla or Jayadhvaj Singha	1648	1663
21. Supungmung or Chakradhvaj Singha ..	1663	1669
22. Sunyatpha or Udayaditya Singha ..	1669	1673
23. Suklampha or Ramadhvaj	1673	1675
24. Suhung	1675	1675
25. Gobar	1675	1675
26. Sujinpha	1675	1677
27. Sudaipha	1677	1679

28	Sulikpha or Lara Raja	..	..	1679	1681
29.	Supatpha or Gadadhar Singha	..	..	1681	1696
30.	Sukhrungpha or Rudra Singha	..	..	1696	1714
31.	Sutanpha or Sib Singha	..	..	1714	1744
32.	Sunenpha or Pramata Singha	..	..	1744	1751
33.	Surampha or Rajesvar Singha	..	..	1751	1769
34.	Sunyeopha or Lakshmi Singha	..	..	1769	1780
35.	Suhitpangpha or Gaurinath Singha	..	..	1780	1794
36.	Suklingpha or Kamalesvar Singha	..	..	1795	1810
37.	Sudingpha or Chandra Kanta Singha	..	..	1810	1818
38.	Purandar Singha	..	..	1818	1819
39.	Jogesvar Singha	..	..	1819	
	Burmese rule	..	..	1819	1824
	British Conquest	..	..	1824	
40.	Purandar Singha rules in upper Assam			1824	
40.	Purandar Singha rules in upper Assam			1832	1838

APPENDIX—"D"
Abom Lakli

Lakli	S.E.	A.D.
1. Kapyeo	1151	1228
2. Daptao	1152	1229
3. Raingi	1153	1230
4. Mungmao	1154	1231
5. Pleksi	1155	1232
6. Katseo	1156	1233
7. Khut singa	1157	1234
8. Rungmut	1158	1235
9. Jaosan	1159	1236
10. Karao	1160	1237
11. Kapmit	1161	1238
12. Dapkeo	1162	1239
13. Raityeo	1163	1240
14. Mungptao	1164	1241
15. Plekangi	1165	1242
16. Katmao	1166	1243
17. Khutsi	1167	1244
18. Rungseo	1168	1245
19. Jaosinga	1169	1246
20. Kamut	1170	1247
21. Kapsan	1171	1248
22. Daprao	1172	1249
23. Raimit	1173	1250
24. Mungkeo	1174	1251
25. Plektyeo	1175	1252
26. Katplao	1176	1253
27. Khutngi	1177	1254
28. Rungmao	1178	1255
29. Taosi	1179	1256
30. Kaseo	1180	1257

31. Kapsinga	..	..	1181	1258
32. Dapmut	..	..	1182	1259
33. Raisan	..	..	1183	1260
34. Mungrao	..	..	1184	1261
35. Plekmit	..	..	1185	1262
36. Katkeo	..	..	1186	1263
37. Khuttyeo	..	..	1187	1264
38. Ruptao	..	..	1188	1265
39. Taongi	..	..	1189	1266
40. Kamao	..	..	1190	1267
41. Kapsi	..	..	1191	1268
42. Dapsei	..	..	1192	1269
43. Raisinga	..	..	1193	1270
44. Mungmut	..	..	1194	1271
45. Pleksan	..	..	1195	1272
46. Katrao	..	..	1196	1273
47. Khutmit	..	..	1197	1274
48. Rungkeo	..	..	1198	1275
49. Tyaotyeo	..	..	1199	1276
50. Kaplao	..	..	1200	1277
51. Kapngi	..	..	1201	1278
52. Dapmao	..	..	1202	1279
53. Raisi	..	..	1203	1280
54. Mungseo	..	..	1204	1281
55. Pleksinga	..	..	1205	1282
56. Katmut	..	..	1206	1283
57. Khutsan	..	..	1207	1284
58. Rungrao	..	..	1208	1285
59. Jaomit	..	..	1209	1286
60. Kakeo	..	..	1210	1287

CHAPTER VII.

The Kingdom of Kamrup or Kamata.

In the early part of the Christian Era, there was a big and powerful kingdom in the north-eastern part of the Indian sub-Continent called Kamarupa.* The Mahabharata and the Puranic and Tantrik literature mention of it very frequently. It is mentioned in the Kamrupar Buranji that the kingdom stretched westward from the river Karatoya to the Dikrai in the east and from the mountain of Nandasaila on the north to the Brihagachala in the south so that it included roughly almost the whole region of the Brahmaputra valley besides Rangpur, Bhutan, CoochBehar, Mymensingh and the Garo Hills.¹ By the beginning of the thirteenth century, the boundary between Kamrup and the Muslim territory of Lakhnawati was the river Karatoya or Begmati as mentioned by Minhaj.² The Gachal inscription unearthed in the present district of Nowgong shows that the eastern boundary of the kingdom was up to that region.³

The history of Medieval Kamrup after the rule of the Pala line of kings is as obscure as disconnected. No inscriptions or coins, nor any contemporary comprehensive historical account of this period has yet been discovered. The Muslim chronicles appear to be insufficient when confronted with more elaborate evidences given by the Buranjis and other indigenous sources. But their contribution is nevertheless valuable in corroborating the detail history of the land. Having fixed our eyes on the basic points of agreement among all these sources and using a certain amount of legitimate historical imagination from the analogy of the history of other peoples we attempt a framework to the construction of the history of Medieval Kamrup.

x We have not retained the Sanskrit spelling throughout our thesis, as in medieval times the kingdom was called Kamrup or Kamata.

¹. K. R. B. p-97.

². T. N. transl. Raverty, pp-560-61. & J. A. S. B. 1873, p-211.

³. I.H. Q. XXII. P. 13. Inscription issued in 1227, records that king Visvasundaradeva ordered one Chandrakanta to repair the damage done by the Mlechchhas to the temple of Siva.

The Kamrupar Buranji and the local Puthis, unlike the Ahom chronicles, do not mention dates chronologically. We have, therefore, been compelled to estimate the dates of the Kamrup kings very roughly by allowing from 20 to 25 years per king counting from the fixed dates of the Muslim invasions mentioned in the Muslim chronicles.

According to the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, which is confirmed by the Kanai Varasi Rock Inscription of North Gauhati, *the ruling king of Kamrup at the time of Bakhtiyar's invasion, was Bartu or Prithu.¹ Haig has shown that this Prithu was no other than a Kamrup king, who not only defeated Bakhtiyar but also Hisan Uddin Iwaj (Sultan Ghias Uddin) in 1227, and was finally dethroned by Nasir Uddin, the son of Iltutmish, in 1228.² The above invasion of Sultan Ghias Uddin is recorded in an inscription unearthed at Gachtal in Nowgong, which indicates that the invader went up to that region. It was issued in 1227, and records that king Visvasundaradeva ordered one Chandrakanta to repair the damage done by the Muslims to the temple of Siva.³ Choudhury suggests that Visvasundaradeva and Bartu or Prithu of Minhaj are identical.⁴ It is mentioned in the Kamrupar Buranji that one Jalpesvar built the Siva temple of Jalpesvar in Jalpaiguri.⁵ The same source mentions that Jalpesvar was another name of Prithu the Kamrup king.⁶

* Sake Turagayugmese madhu-masa-trayadase Kamarupam samagatya Turuskah ksayam ayayuh, (turaga-7, yugma-2, isa-11). On the 13th of Chaitro (27th March) in the year Saka 1127 (A. D. 1205), the Turks coming into Kamrup were destroyed. K. S. Intro. p-44.

¹. T. N. pp-560-64, & 628-29.

².. C. H. I. Vol. III. pp-50-54.

³. Bhattasali N. K. New lights on the history of Assam, I. H. Q. XXII. pp-12-14.

⁴ Choudhury P. C., H. C. P. A., p-422.

⁵ The statement is confirmed in the Yogini Tantra, which is not available to us. (See H. C. P. A. p-423).

⁶. K. R. B. p-98.

From his long reign and the fact that he repulsed two Muhammadan invasions, it appears that Prithu was a very powerful ruler. It is mentioned in the Buranji that he was a king of a different line from that of the old kings of Kamrup.¹ We know that from the second quarter of the twelfth century, Kamrup was ruled by a new line of kings, the founder of which was Vaidyadeva, who came from Bengal.² Prithu must have been a descendant of either Vaidyadeva or Vallabhadeva, who ruled Kamrup at the end of the twelfth century.³ We cannot agree with Ray, who contended that Vallabhadeva was king when Bakhtiyar invaded Kamrup.⁴ It is mentioned in the Tejpur Copper-plate Inscription that in the year Saka 1107, corresponding to A. D. 1185, a grant of land was made by a ruler named Vallabhadeva.⁵ The Kanai Varasi Rock Inscription shows the date of Bakhtiyar's invasion as 1205, and the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* records that the ruling king of Kamrup at the time of the said invasion was Prithu.⁶ Choudhury suggests that the reign of Vallabhadeva ended shortly after 1185.⁷ So the contention of Ray appears untenable. The above mentioned Kanai Varasi Rock Inscription proves the fact that the capital of Prithu was at 'Kamarupanagara' mentioned in the second inscription of Dharmapala, near present North Gauhati.⁸

From the statements recorded in the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, it becomes evident that it was not Bakhtiyar's intention to cause bad relations with Prithu, rather he wanted to make friends with him, perhaps in the hope of military aid, which he deemed necessary in connection with his expedition to Tibet. Evidently Prithu wanted to help him, which fact was communicated to Bakhtiyar by a letter, with the condition that he must postpone

1. Ibid.

2. E. H. K. pp-190-94.

3. H. C. P. A. p-420.

4. Ray H. C. The Dynastic History of Northern India, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1931, p-260.

5. E. H. K. p-197.

6. See p-135

7. H. C. P. A. p-420.

8. K. S. pp-44 & 177.

the idea until the next year. When Bakhtiyar disregarded the counsel of Prithu by refusing to give up the plan, and proceeded on his journey, Prithu was enraged and decided to attack the Muslim army on their return.¹ He removed the flat stones of the platform of the bridge on the Barnadi,² and rendered it impassable. Then he blocked the road in the rear of Bakhtiyar and cut off his supplies. With a view to preventing the soldiers of Bakhtiyar from obtaining provisions, Prithu caused their whole route inside his kingdom to be laid waste with fire.³ The Muslim chronicler adds that when Bakhtiyar was held up at the bridge, his troops were not strong enough to resist the Hindu archers, who attacked them in the open field. The Muslims thereupon took shelter in a nearby temple. This Prithu surrounded with a bamboo stockade. The Muslims succeeded in breaking through the lines of their besiegers, but many were drowned in attempting to cross the river, and, out of 10,000 cavalry, it is doubtful whether hardly 100 followers of Bakhtiyar returned. The rest were captured and slaughtered by the Kamrupi soldiers. Bakhtiyar personally escaped capture by the Kamrupi king, but died shortly afterward from fatigue and mortification.⁴ From the description of the encounter between Bakhtiyar and the Kamrupi king, it appears that Prithu was a brave warrior and knew of military tactics exceptional in India, which proved most effective in defeating the Muslim general, who had previously conquered Bihar, Bengal and Orissa.

Bhattacharyya contends that Bakhtiyar crossed the Karatoya by the bridge, and did not enter the territory of Kamrup at all but passed along its western frontier only.⁵ But we cannot agree with him. There was never a bridge on the Karatoya. Had there been any, it must have been mentioned in accounts of

¹. T. N. pp-561-64.

². See p-138

³. T. N. p-568.

⁴. T. N. pp-569-73.

⁵. M. N. E. F. P. p-53.

the later Muslim invasions of Kamrup, on the course of each of which, the Karatoya had to have been crossed, being the border between the two kingdoms. The author does not appear to have followed the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, the only contemporary source, carefully. Bakhtiyar followed the course of the river Tista, and nearing the hills crossed it by fording. There he was told that a more direct route to Tibet or China lay to the further east. He, therefore travelled eastward within Kamrup over the high road leading from Jalpaiguri to eastern Assam. On this road he crossed the stone bridge to the north-west of Gauhati. The bridge then spanned the Barnadi which, running through the present abandoned bed known as the Puspabhadra, fell into the Brahmaputra several miles below its present confluence.¹ Bakhtiyar then followed the course of this river towards the north and reached the foot-hills near about Kumrikata on the Bhutan border which is due north of Gauhati. This Kumrikata was probably the place mentioned as Kararpatan or Karampatan. His return journey was also the same. It is, therefore clear that Bakhtiyar's army actually penetrated into Kamrup and was destroyed not far from its capital.

It is mentioned in the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* that, in 1227, Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaj invaded Kamrup with an enormous army, when the ruling king was still Prithu. The Muslim chronicle gives a very scanty account of the second invasion. According to Minhaj, Iwaj led his army from Lakhnawati towards the territory of Bang and Kamrud.² This shows that the route of this expedition was the same as that of Bakhtiyar. Gait contends that Iwaj undertook his expedition to Assam through the river Brahmaputra by boats.³ He never informs us of his source. But his statement does not appear correct. After the invasion of Bakhtiyar, Prithu fortified the cities of Rangpur and Jalpaiguri, at the western frontier⁴ of his kingdom adjacent to the territory of Lakhnawati, with extensive fortifications and

¹. E. H. K. pp-212 & 220.

². T. N. pp-566-67.

³. Ibid. p-594.

⁴. H. A. p-37.

⁵. B. D. R. Vol. I. p-8.

embankments, the reason of which must have been to give effective resistance to the further inroads of the Mussalmans from that direction. As to the return of the army of Iwaj, it is mentioned in the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* that whether part of or whole of his army returned with him is doubtful, and does not record that Iwaj succeeded in reaching the capital of Kamrup in North Gauhati.¹ Gait without mentioning his manuscript source, states that Iwaj was defeated and driven back.² So it is evident that Iwaj had been defeated by Prithu on the very outskirts of his territory after many of his soldiers being either killed or captured. The territory of Lakhnawati could not at that time touch the river Brahmaputra, which was inside the boundary of the Kingdom of Prithu and the later Sena rulers of East Bengal.³ So the contention of Gait that Iwaj ascended the Brahmaputra is incredible. During his retreat from the Hindu kingdom, Iwaj suffered such heavy losses that he was unable to resist Nasir-uddin, son of Iltutmish, the Delhi Emperor, at Lakhnawati. The Muslim general escaped capture by the infidels only to meet his death at the hands of his co-religionists.⁴

Minhaj made the following reference to Prithu or Britu : "the accused Bartu (Britu), beneath whose sword above a hundred and twenty thousand Mussalmans had attained martyrdom, he (Nasir-uddin) overthrew and sent to hell ; and the refractory infidels in different parts of the country of Awadh, he reduced and overcame and brought a considerable number under obedience."⁵ From the above statement it appears that Nasir-uddin defeated and killed a Hindu chief called Bartu or Prithu. Raverty stated that "who this Hindu chief was wr

¹. T. N. p-594.

². H. A. p-37.

³. T. N. p-558.

⁴. Ibid. p-595.

⁵. T. N. pp-628-29.

have no means of discovering, I fear, as other subsequent writer⁸ do not notice these events at all. He is styled in some of the best copies as above, which is probably meant for Prithu."¹ Haig declared that this Britu or Prithu was no other than the Hindu king of Kamrup, "who had until that time defeated the Muslims on every occasion on which they had attacked him."² From a critical examination of the above statements, it becomes⁵ evident that Prithu must have been a Kamrup king. We cannot agree with Bhattasali who contends that "Prithu must have been a man of Audh and not of Kamarupa."³ There are several arguments against this. For one thing it is unlikely that a Hindu chief of Audh, which was fairly strongly held by the Muslims, would be able to cause such great trouble to them. Moreover Bhattasali does not appear to be aware of the fact that the Kamrupar Buranji mentions that king Jalpesvar of Kamrup was also known as Prithu.⁴ We have shown that Jalpesvar was a powerful king and was responsible for the first defeat of the Muslims.⁵ The above passage of Minhaj evidently refers to two separate exploits of Nasir-uddin : firstly to his defeat of Prithu, and secondly to his reduction to obedience of the infidels of Audh. There is no special reason for believing that the one was in any way connected with the other.

From the following statement of Haig, we can find out the date of the end of the reign of Prithu, the Kamrupi king : "Mahmud now governed Bengal as his father's (Iltutmish) deputy and made the most of an opportunity which was closed by his early death in April, 1229, for he defeated and slew Raja Britu, possibly the Raja of Kamrupa."⁶ It is, therefore evident that Nasir Uddin Mahmud attacked and killed Prithu in the year 1228, after overthrowing Iwaj from the governorship of Lakhnawati some time before his death.

- 1. Ibid. p-629 (F. T.)
- 2. C. H. I. Vol. III. p-54.
- 3. I. H. Q. Vol. XXII p-6.
- 4. See p-136.
- 5. See pp-136-37.
- 6. C. H. I. Vol. III. p-54.

After a personal visit to the ruins ascribed to Prithu in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Rangpur, Buchanan remarked that "this Prithu Raja from the size of his capital and the numerous works raised in the vicinity by various dependents and connections of the court, must have governed a large extent of country and for a considerable period of time."¹ Glazier mentioned Prithu as a very powerful king of Kamrup and ascribed to him the construction of extensive fortifications in the present districts of Jalpaiguri and Rangpur.² Firminger remarked on the sites of the ruins of Prithu's constructions that "the ruins of his city lie half in Chaklaboda, half in Pergunah Bykuntpore in the present district of Julpaigoree. The city consisted of four enclosures, one within the other; the innermost containing the Raja's palace. In both the inner and middle cities were subdivisions, separated from each other by ramparts and ditches, dividing each city into several quarters. The outermost city of all was tenanted by the lowest classes of the populace. The palace was strongly fortified for the times in which it was built; the defences were lofty earthen rampart with wide moats on the outer sides and advantage was taken of a small river, the Talma, to form a deep fosse under the embankment between the middle and outer cities. In some places the earthen defences were faced with brick and surmounted by brick walls; the Raja's house had also a wall around it. The only remains left are portions of the ramparts and heaps of bricks in various places."³ We have already mentioned that these extensive constructions were undertaken by Prithu after Bakhtiyar's invasion by that route in order to be in a strong position to give effective resistance to the further Muhammadan invasions at the very entrance to his kingdom. Depending upon a local tradition of Rangpur, Buchanan stated that Prithu met his death by throwing himself into a tank when his capital was captured by the army of the untouchables.⁴ This seems to refer to the invasion of Kamrup by Mahmud Nasir-uddin in 1227-28, and the death or capture of Prithu, at the hands of the Muslim army.

¹. Martin, *Eastern India*, Vol. III. p-406.

². *Report on the District of Rangpur*, p-8.

³. B. D. R. Vol. I. P. 8.

⁴. Martin, *Eastern India*, Vol. III. p-406.

We can gain an idea of the wealth and prosperity of the kingdom of Kamrup early in the 13th century from the writings of the contemporary Muslim chroniclers. Minhaj stated that in course of their flight, during their retreat from Assam in 1206,¹ the Muslim soldiers took shelter in an "idol temple in the vicinity of that place of exceeding height, strength and sublimity, and very handsome, and in the numerous idols both of gold and silver were deposited and one great idol so (large) that its weight was by conjecture upwards of two or three thousand mans (one man is equal to 8^o lbs) of beaten gold."²

The history of Medieval Kamrup is that of progress and prosperity. Though the feudatory chiefs or Bhuyans became occasionally virtually independent of each other, they had no feuds or dissensions with the central Government in the capital. Their readiness to combine immediately against a common foe reminds us the chivalrous policy of the heroes of medieval Hindu India. Sarkar, in describing the history of medieval Bengal under the Mamluks (1227-87), remarked that "the fortune of Islam at that period was at a standstill, and the Muslim power of Lakhnawati suffered relative decay in comparison with the Hindu powers in Kamrup."³ In the various kingdoms of medieval India, the Muslims always gained the upper hand. But in the east they only took second place beside the contemporary Hindu power of Kamrup. So the statement of Vasu on Kamrup's history that "the invasions of Rampala, Kumarapala, Vijoyasena, Ballalasena and Lakshmanasena had rendered the country very weak,"⁴ does not appear true. We shall show later that at least two of the later Kamrupi kings took the title 'Rajrajesvara,' which indicates very considerable power.

¹. See p-137.

*But no trace of this gigantic image of gold is to be found now in the temple of North Gauhati, identified with that mentioned by Minhaj. The weight given by Minhaj seems almost incredible; we must assume that in fact the image was gilded.

². T. N. , pp-569.

⁴. H. B. , pp-42-43.

Although we have some accounts of the conflicts of the Kamrupi kings with the Muslims of Bengal, there are very few or no records from which to work out a connected account of the history of Kamrup from the beginning of the thirteenth to the early sixteenth century, when the Koches came to rule the country. The Kamrupar Buranji, the Rajvangsavali and the Buranjis by Haliram and Gunabhiram, give a list of Kamrupi kings, which is not in chronological order; moreover many of the rulers do not appear to have ruled in the above period. But the list of kings recorded in the *Guru Charitra* by Ram Charan Thakur, seems to be very much more useful for constructing an authentic history of the land.

It is mentioned in the *Guru Charitra* that there was a king named Sandhya who became the Gaudesvar. His son and successor was Sindhu Rai who assumed the title 'Rajrajesvar.' This king was succeeded by his son Rup Narayan whose fame spread to other countries. The son and successor of Rup Narayan was Singhadhvaj, whose minister was a Kayastha, Pratapadhvaj by name, whose father was one Laharia. Pratapadhvaj killed king Singhadhvaj and himself became the king. He had a son named Durlabh Narayan by his queen Prabhavati.¹ But the chronicle mentions neither the dates nor the location of the country. There is another chronicle, *Katha Charitra*,² which is very helpful in this connection. It records that there was a king in Kamatapur named Durlabh Narayan who was contemporary to Chandibar, the great-great-grand-father of Sankardev, the Vaisanava reformer, who was born in 1449.³ Prithu erected enormous fortifications on the western borders of his kingdom to check the further Muhammadan inroads from that direction.⁴ Some of his successors must have removed the capital from North Gauhati to Kamatapur, a few miles distance from the present city of CoochBehar, for reasons with an eye to the

¹. E. H. K., pp. 245-46, based on Ram Charan Thakur's *Guru Charitra*, of which a copy is not available.

². Gunabhiram, A. B., pp-48-51.

³. See pp-83-84, (above.)

⁴. See pp-138-39 (above)

Muslims. We have no record of serious trouble from the Ahoms, who were at this time establishing themselves firmly on the eastern part of Assam. The change of capital, therefore, probably had no connection with the Ahom invasion of Upper Assam. It is mentioned in the Persian chronicles that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Kamrupi kings were called 'Kamesvar.' The Buranjists mentioned them as 'Kamatesvar.' So it is evident that the predecessors of Durlabh Narayan in the royal line were surely the Kamrupi kings. Allowing an average of approximately 20 to 25 years for each of the four fore-fathers of Sankardev and the five predecessors of Durlabh Narayan, we can fix the reign of Sandhya in the middle of the thirteenth century.

Sandhya (c. 1228-60) :

In 1228, Prithu was killed by Malik-us-said Nasir-ud-din Mahmud Shah, who placed the son of the deceased king on the throne on condition of tribute.¹ The victor having retired from the country, this Kamrup king stopped the payment of tribute and assumed independence. The Muslim sources do not mention the name of the successor of Prithu. We have already observed that in the middle of the thirteenth century, Sandhya was the king of Kamrup. The *Guru Charitra* shows that Sandhya was the ruler when in the year, 1254-55, Tughril Khan Malik Yuzbeg, also known as Sultan Mughis-ud-din, invaded Kamrup.² Choudhury suggests that Prithu and Sandhya were the descendants or successors of Vaidyadeva or Vallabhadeva.³ Though there is no definite evidence to this effect it seems a very reasonable hypothesis. Like the Muslim sources, the indigenous chronicles also do not record the name of the king before Sandhya and after Prithu. Under the circumstances, Sandhya can be considered as the successor of Prithu.

1. T. N., p-628.

2. E. H. K., p-250.

3. H. C. P. A., p-203.

In 1229, Nasir-ud-din, the Bengal governor, died,¹ when Sandhya drove away the Muslims from the country and brought the whole region up to the Karatoya under his direct supervision. Next he made preparations to invade Gaur, the Muslim territory, to avenge the previous invasions of Kamrup by the Muhammadans. The whole history of the Mamluks in Bengal from the second quarter to the end of the thirteenth century, is a story of usurpations and murders, internal dissensions and civil wars. At the same time the Hindu nobles in Kamrup under a new name, 'Bhuyan,' joined forces to strengthen the country against the Muslims. Simultaneously, there appeared another setback in the fortune of Islam by the rising of a new Hindu power under a great leader named Dasaratha Danuja Madhava of Chandradvipa, who controlled the greater part of east and southern Bengal. But by far the most direct and effective blow to the growth of the Muslim power in Bengal at that time was the rivalry of the great eastern Ganga empire of Orissa. A feudatory of the Gangas from Jajpur on the banks of the Vaitarani river became a regular terror to the Muslims and forced them to concentrate on guarding that frontier at the cost of the other.² So at this juncture, which was most unfortunate for the Muslim ruler of Lakhnawati, the Hindu Kingdom of Kamrup with its enormous military power under the leadership of the powerful Bhuyans, and with its most ambitious ruler Sandhya, avenged herself of her previous losses at the hands of the Muslim invaders. Sandhya invaded the eastern border of the kingdom of Gauda and annexed certain trans-Karatoya regions to his own dominion without any strong resistance from the conquered. Next he assumed the title "Gaudesvara."³ This period was one of the most eventful of Assam's history, as at that time Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom dynasty in Assam, entered the eastern part of Upper Assam after crossing the Patkai mountain.

¹ See p-140 above.

² H. B. p-43

³ See p. 143 above

It is mentioned in the *Tabaquat-i-Nasiri*, that in Hijri 655, corresponding to A. D. 1254/55, Malik Yuzbeg determined to march upon Kamrup, and despatched a great army across the river Bagmati (or Karatoya).¹ Barua says that the invasion by Malik Yuzbeg was undertaken because the then Raja of Kamrup stopped payment of the tributes.² But this is not true. We have already shown that Sandhya stopped the payment of the taxes long before this time, just after the death of Nasir uddin in 1229. In our view the probable reason of this invasion was to avenge Sandhya's annexation of the trans-Karatoya region and his assumption of the title "Gaudesvara." Fisher says that Yuzbeg entered Kamrup by way of Sylhet and Cachar.³ But he is wrong. At that time the whole of east Bengal, along with the above region, was under the rule of the descendants of Lakshmanasena and other Hindu rulers.⁴ Sarkar says that Sultan Mughisuddin Yuzbeg crossed the river Karatoya somewhere near Ghoraghat in the Rangpur district and marched through the modern Goalpara district along the northern bank of the Brahmaputra river.⁵ This appears to be correct because the Muslim hold at that time was limited only in Lakhnawati. Raverty says that the Kamrup capital at that time was Kamatapur.⁶ But he is not correct because three coins minted by Malik Yuzbeg at Lakhnawati in A. H. 653, A. D. 1252/53, were found at Gauhati in 1880.⁷ These are considered to be part of the loot obtained from some of the soldiers of Yuzbeg captured by the Kamrup king. Moreover, the Kanai Varasi and Gachtal inscriptions prove that Kamatapur was not the capital of Kamrup, up to the first half of the thirteenth century. Thus it appears that the city of "Kamrud" invaded by Yuzbeg was no other than the present North Gauhati or its immediate

¹ T. N. p. 764.

² E. H. K. p. 228.

³ J. A. S. B. 1840, p. 840.

⁴ H. B. Vol. 1, p. 226/27, Vol. II p. 54.

⁵ Ibid. Vol. 11, p. 53.

⁶ T. N. p. 764.

⁷ J. A. S. B. 1910, p. 621.

vicinity, which was named "Kamarupa Nagara" by the Pala line of kings. So the contention of Cunningham that Kamatapur must have been the capital of Kamrup from the seventh century is wrong.¹ We shall show later that it was Sandhya who, after defeating Yuzbeg in 1255, shifted his capital from North Gauhati to Kamatapur.

It is recorded in the T. N. that "Malik Yuz-Bak took the city of Kamrud and possessed himself of countless wealth and treasure, to such extent, that the amount and weight thereof cannot be contained within the area of record."² From this it can be presumed that the kingdom of Kamrup at that time was very prosperous and rich. Gait states that the Muslims for a time were successful and celebrated their conquest by erecting a mosque.³ Bhattacharyya goes a step further and contends that the Muslims tried to establish the Islamic faith in the conquered land on a solid basis.⁴ But this appears to be an altogether unwarranted surmise. Gait never informs us of his source and the erection of a mosque is not mentioned even by the Muslim historians. Bhattacharyya refers to p. 73 of Gunabhiram's Assam Buranji, which does not give the above facts. Bhattacharyya also likewise does not confirm his statement. However, in p. 66 of Stewart's History of Bengal, it is said that a mosque was built, but the author does not quote any authority to substantiate his statement, which may have been based on a tradition of local maulavis, which could hardly be accepted, since such traditions are usually very unreliable. The T. N. states that Khutba was read in Kamrup, and "signs of Islam" appeared there during the Muslim invasion, but nothing is said about the building of a mosque or forcible conversion. Khutba is regularly read on Fridays by all Muslims, and it would be surprising if the invaders did not do so. It may be a fact that in the first instance the invaders may have temporarily occupied the

¹ Majumdar, S. N., Cunningham's Ancient Geography of India, Calcutta. 1924, pp. 573-74

² T. N. p. 764.

³ H. A. p. 97.

⁴ M. N. E. F. P. p. 56.

capital evacuated by the Kamrup soldiers, but that does not mean that the Muslims got full possession of the city, for they were all the while hotly engaged in fierce fighting with the innumerable Kamrup soldiers, who were armed with bows and arrows. In this connection it may be opportune to state here the singular system of fighting of the Kamrup army. They never give very strong resistance at the first advance of the enemy, but attack effectively from the rear. We have already seen that in a similar way Prithu attacked and defeated 'Md. Bin Bakhtiyar in 1205/6. The same fate awaited our present invader also. We have already shown that Bhattacharyya incorporated some vague facts in his book. Here also we meet with some more false statements. He says of "the resistance given to this invader by Sandhya "that the reigning king, who was feeblehearted, dared not fight the Muhammadan invader, and fled away from the capital, leaving him an easy victor." This statement seems biased; Bhattacharyya calls the king "feeblehearted," who destroyed the invading army to a man and captured the Sultan Yuzbeg with all his children, family and dependents.¹

T. N. refers in this connection to a legendary anecdote "that from the reign of Gushtasib, Shah of Ajam, who had invaded Chin, and had come towards Hindustan by that route (by way of Kamrud), of twelve hundred hoards of treasure, all sealed, which were deposited there, and any portion of which wealth and treasures not one of the Rues had availed himself of, the whole fell into the hands of the Musalman troops. The reading of the Khutbah and Friday religious service were instituted in Kamrud, and signs of the people of Islam appeared there. But of what avail was all this, when the whole from frenzy, he gave to the winds. For the wise have said that the seeking to perform overmuch work hath never turned out fortunate for the seeker"² The last portion of the paragraph speaks of its own lack of historicity. Yuzbeg is compared to a legendary

¹ M. N. E. F. P. p. 56.

² T. N. pp. 764-66.

³ T. N. pp. 764-66.

king, for whom there is no historical basis ; and his exploits are held up to the reader as giving moral lessons in the failure of overweening ambition. The actual basis of the statement seems to be the enormous wealth and treasure of the kingdom of Kamrup. On the commencement of the rainy season, the Kamrupi soldiers rose in arms on all sides, cut off supplies to the city, and seized the plains and waterways. The Sultan caught hold of a guide who undertook to conduct his army by a shorter route through the submontane tract, evidently by way of Cooch-Bihar and Jalpaiguri, in the direction of Devkot. When the Sultan had retreated several stages, and entered the defiles and jungles he was trapped in a narrow valley assailed by the Hindus on all sides. In an engagement there, the entire Turkish army surrendered and the Sultan with all his children, family and dependents became captives in the hands of Sandhya, the Kamrupi King.¹

It is mentioned in the T. N. that the Muslims got immense spoils and booty in this invasion.² But on a careful study of the source it does not seem so. As long as the Muslim army was in the capital, it was kept engaged in fighting with the expert archers of the Kamrup army. Soon afterwards the Muslims, being unable to withstand the local forces, had to retreat. Everybody knows the story of their disastrous return journey. Moreover, if the campaign was a profitable one, it is surprising that it is not mentioned in another source of Muslim history, the Riyas-us-salatin, which in other respects closely agrees with T. N. Therefore we cannot agree with Minhaj's presumption. It is no doubt a fact that the invaders gathered certain booty at their first entrance into the capital, but to no avail. Sandhya immediately ordered his soldiers to surround the capital and cut off the further supplies of the enemy. In the meantime the invaders started their retreat. The Kamrup forces followed them. After a short journey the Muslims were forced to defend

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

themselves against the Hindus along a narrow road in a mountain pass. After a decisive engagement on the slope of a hill, the grand army of Malik Yuzbeg was entirely defeated and killed. Yuzbeg himself with his son became a captive in the hands of the Kamrup king. Yuzbeg received serious wounds, on account of which he breathed his last in the presence of his son. Sarkar says of this Muslim expedition that "the Kamrup disaster broke the spell of the invincibility of Turkish arms with the Mongoloid tribes of Koch and Mech, and started them on a new career of political greatness that affected the history of Medieval Bengal very deeply for the next three centuries."¹

Following the Muslim historians, who say that Malik Yuzbeg, in order to avoid the flooded country, retreated along the slopes of the hills and was defeated by soldiers of the Kamrup king in a defile, Barua says that "he (Yuzbeg) was retreating from Gauhati along the foot of the Khasi hills and the Garo hills in the direction of Mymensing."² But this is not correct. We have already seen that at that time the whole of East Bengal from the border of Kamrup was under Hindu rulers. The slopes of the hills mentioned in the T. N. were shallow mountain ranges along the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra, within Kamrup. This is the view of J. N. Sarkar.

At this time a most significant event in the history of Kamrup took place. To check the further inroads of the Mussalmans, Sandhya shifted his capital from North Gauhati to Kamatapur, a few miles' distance from the present city of Cooch Behar. This place had more strategic importance than the old city of Kamrupa Nagara. From now onward the Kingdom of Kamarupa was called 'Kamata' and the king designated as 'Kamatesvar.' It seems probable that this occurrence took place immediately after the defeat and death of Malik Yuzbeg in 1255. We have shown already that the theory that Kamata was the capital at an earlier period is not tenable.

¹ H. B. Vol. 11. p. 54.

² E. H. K. p. 232.

We cannot agree with Barua when he says that the removal of the capital by Sandhya in 1260 was necessitated by the menace of the Kacharis and also by the fact that Gauhati was then easily accessible to raiding Muslim invaders from the direction of Sonargaon.¹ At that time the Kacharis were no doubt the immediate eastern neighbours of the Kamata King, but it is also a fact that, by 1260, they were not in a position to encroach on the peace and prosperity of the Kamata Kingdom. The Ahoms, under their powerful leader Sukapha, by that time occupied a vast tract of the Brahmaputra valley and were maintaining policy of annexation and integration. The Kacharis themselves were in a too circumscribed position to maintain their hold in the Dhansiri region against the regular and deliberate inroads of the Shan invaders. Barua's next contention, that Gauhati was at that time easily accessible to the pillage and plunder of the Muslims through Sonargaon, is also unreasonable. At that time the whole of east Bengal was under the sovereignty of the independent Hindu rulers, Madhav Sen and Su Sen,² or Kesav Sen and Visvarup Sen,³ the successors of Lakshman Sen, who were ruling over the region roughly covering the present districts of Dacca and Mymensingh, from their capital at Vikrampur. We have already shown that the invasion of Kamrup by Yuzbeg was not undertaken through the southern region of the Brahmaputra.⁴ At the end of this century, one Rai Danuj became very powerful at this corner of Bengal, and helped Sultan Ghiyas Uddin Balban, in his campaign against Sultan Mughiz Uddin Tughril in 1281. It is only after this event that Sonargaon emerges as a well-defined division of Bengal under the House of Balban.⁵

Sandhya was one of the very powerful early medieval rulers of Kamrup. In his time the country was possessed of immense material prosperity and moral unity. In his reign a new class of powerful nobilities under the names of the "Bhuyans" rose

¹ E. H. K. p. 250.

² T. N. p. 558.

³ H. B. Vol. 1. p. 227.

⁴ See pp. 146-47 above

⁵ H. B. Vol. 11, p. 65.

in the country, and proved an effective barrier to the progress of Muslim power in the old "kingdom of Kamarupa." Sandhya is said to have given one of his daughters in marriage to the powerful contemporary Chutia king of Sadiya named Ratna-dhvaj. This Chutia rulers are said to have been very friendly with the last Sena rulers of eastern and southern Bengal.¹ At that time the Sena rulers were also designated "Gaudesvara." So it appears that all the Hindu powers from the remote corner of the North Eastern India to Bengal in the west, united in friendly, cultural and political relations to stop further progress of Islam in that portion of the Indian sub-continent.²

Sindhu Rai (1260-85) :

Sandhya was succeeded by his son Sindhu Rai in 1260. One of the early events of his reign appears to have been an invasion of Kamata by Sukapha the great. Nothing more is mentioned in the Buranji except the fact that the Kamatesvar acknowledged the supremacy of the Ahom king.³ So it seems probable that the eastern part of Kamata was invaded by the victorious soldiers of Sukapha, when Sindhu Rai was pre-eminently occupied with the heavy task of guarding the western frontier of Kamata against the Muslims from his new capital at Kamatapur. At such a critical moment in the history of Kamata, Sindhu prudently did not want to continue in antagonism with a ruler who, after conquering so many local principalities, had established a kingdom at the eastern extremity of his own. He made friends with the Ahom king on condition of tribute.

It is mentioned in the Guru Charitra that Sindhu Rai assumed the title "*Rajrajesvar*" i. e. paramount over all the kings. This indicates that the tribute paid to the Ahoms was only temporary. Sukapha died in 1268, when his son Suteupha succeeded him.

¹ See Chapter on the Chutias

² H. B. Vol. I. p. 227.

³ A. H. B. p. 38.

During the rule of the latter, the Ahom power was at a standstill. So, in the seventies of the thirteenth century, Sindhu may have stopped the payment of tribute to the Ahoms and assumed independence by declaring himself paramount. He ruled up to the year 1285.

The *Riyaz-us-salatin* records that Tughril Khan, alias Sultan Mughizuddin, the viceroy of Lahknawati, in 1279, sent an expedition to the kingdom of Kamrup.¹ No other indigenous or Persian contemporary or later source mentions this event at all. The *Riyaz-us-salatin* is a comparatively modern compilation, having been written in 1787-88, more than five hundred years after this event, and cannot therefore be believed as true. Under the circumstances, we cannot incorporate its statement into our present study. Salim, its author, may have confused the Bengal Governor Malik Ikhtiyar uddin Yuzbeg-i-Tughril Khan, who was defeated in 1255 at the hands of the Kamrup king Sandhya, with Sultan Mughiz uddin Tughril Khan, the viceroy of Lakhnawati in 1279. Our presumption becomes stronger when the fact that Salim gives no account of the disastrous defeat of Yuzbeg at the hands of Sandhya, which is so circumstantially narrated by Minhaj, is noticed. Banerjee² and Vasu³ unfortunately, could not escape the mistake of Salim.

Rup Narayan (1285-1300) :

Sindhu Rai was succeeded by his son Rup Narayan in 1285. It is said that the fame of this king reached far and wide to foreign countries. Nothing more is known of him. He is said to have ruled up to the year 1300.⁴

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¹ M. N. E. F. P. p. 58.

² Banerjee R. D., *Banglar Itihas*, p. 66, V. 11.

³ S. H. K. V. 1. p. 247.

⁴ E. H. K. p. 254.

Singhadhvaj (1300-1305) :

At the death of Rup Narayan in 1300, his son Singhadhvaj became the Kamata king. This king did not enjoy a long reign. He had a minister named Manik, a Kayastha by caste. His father's name was Laharia. In 1305, Manik killed Singhadhvaj and declared himself the king of Kamata by assuming the title "Pratapadhvaj."¹

Pratapadhvaj (1305-1325) :

Pratapadhvaj brought an end of the line of kings, who are said to be the descendants of Vaidyadeva or Vallabhadeva. He seems to have come from a family of the feudatory chief of the then Kamata. By virtue of his official jurisdiction, he may have exercised considerable authority in the kingdom. At the murder of his master he became the virtual head of the state. He checked the state of confusion and disorder, which are the natural outcome of such unnatural events as the assassination of a ruling king.² At that time the contemporary Ahom king was Sukhangpha. He was one of the most ambitious Ahom rulers among the immediate successors of Sukapha. After the death of the latter, the then Kamatesvar stopped the payment of tributes and assumed independence. But this disorderly state of affairs in the kingdom of Kamata gave Sukhangpha an opportunity to expand his kingdom towards the west at the cost of the former. He sent an expedition to invade Kamata. The battle between the two countries continued for some years. A great number of casualties occurred on both sides. At last a treaty was concluded in which Pratapadhvaj gave his daughter Rajani in marriage to Sukhangpha.³

¹ E. H. K. p. 254.

² See p. 143 above.

³ Barua H. K. A. B. p. 15.

Early in the twentieth century three coins dated A. H. 721 (A. D. 1321-22), were found at Enayethpur, (fifteen miles south-east of the present Mymensingh town), and at Rupaibari, in the present Nowgong district of Assam.¹ These attracted the attention of many scholars, who supposed that Sultan Ghias uddin Bahadur Shah, the then Governor of Bengal, invaded the kingdom of Kamata and penetrated up to the Nowgong district of present Assam. But no sources mention it. Bhattacharyya contends that "it was about the year 1321-22 A. D. (721-22 A. H.) that the Bengal Sultan Ghiyas uddin Bahadur Shah found himself strong enough to leave Sunargaon and move up the Brahmaputra and thus covered the northern part of the modern Mymensingh district—subjugated the south-eastern part of the Kamrupa kingdom, comprising the region round Enayethpur and Ghiaspur, and then followed up his victory by an attack upon the interior (the modern Koch Bihar), whence he resumed touch with the river and advanced up to Nowgong."² He is neither correct as to the course of the expedition nor is he reliable as to the history of Bahadur Shah's reign. If an expedition was planned to raid somewhere in the Nowgong district there was no necessity to alter the direction towards the interior of Cooch Behar, and vice versa, when his own possessions in Bengal were contested by his powerful father and half-a-dozen grown up brothers.³ From A. H. 711-17 (A. D. 1311-17), Bahadur was at Lakhnawati in continuous contest with his rival brothers, Jalaluddin and Shihabuddin Bughdah Shah and others. On being ousted from North Bengal, he retired to Sonargaon in East Bengal. While keeping his father out of his new headquarters, the Sultan, who had no legal right to the throne, had a very chequered career till the death of the former in A. H. 722 (A. D. 1322). Next a bloody fratricidal war engaged Bahadur for a time until he had murdered all his brothers except one, Nasiruddin Ibrahim, who escaped into hiding. As soon as the

¹ Supplement to the Catalogue of the Provincial Coin Cabinet, Shillong' pp. 110-11., M. N. E. F. P.p. 60.

² M. N. E. F. P. pp. 59-60.

³ H. B. V. 11. p.80

Sultan had safeguarded his position on the throne, he scented the danger of an expedition against Bengal by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq Shah, which actually took place in A. H. 724 (Jan., 1324). Soon after, Nasiruddin Ibrahim made himself master of Lakhnawati and joined the imperialists in Tirhut against his rival brother Bahadur Shah, who retired at last to East Bengal. We require no more to serve our purpose. The subsequent history of Bahadur Shah is known to all.¹ In A. H. 721-22 (A. D. 1322), it was impossible for Bahadur to send an expedition to such a long distance to the Nowgong district in central Assam. We cannot agree with Barua, who also ascribes such a marauding raid to the unlucky Sultan Bahadur Shah.²

Pratapadhvaj maintained good relations with the Ahom king Sukhangpha up to the end of his rule. He had a son by his queen Prabhavati, named Durlabh Narayan. He died in 1325.³

Dharma Narayan (1325-30) :

It is stated in the Katha Charitra that there was a king over the region bordering the river Mahananda in North Bengal named Dharma Narayan. He is said to have had long and continuous warfare with Durlabh Narayan, the son and successor of Pratapadhvaj.⁴ Vasu, following Batu Bhatta's 'Devavamsa,' contends that this Dharma Narayan was no other than a king of the Deva dynasty of Bengal. He further says that king Dharma Narayan or Dharma Pal was the son of Hari Deva who settled at Pandu Nagara (modern Pandua), being driven away by the Mussalmans from Kankadvipa, where his father Danujarideva had his capital.⁵ The history of this Danujarideva or Danujarai or Danujamardanadeva has been a bone of contention to the various students of the history of Medieval Bengal. The scientific study of the history of medieval Hindu chiefs and

¹ Banerjee R. D., Banglar Itihas, V. 11. p. 88-95. H. B. Vol. II, p. 80-84.

² E. H. K. p. 233.

³ See p. 143 above

⁴ Gunabhiram, A. B. p. 48.

⁵ S. H. K. V. II. p. 2.

rulers of Bengal is a desideratum long overdue. Vasu does not seem to be correct in his conjecture. It is unreasonable to think that Dharma Narayan was connected with Rai Danuja who ruled in Sonargaon in 1281. We know his history but we do not get Dharma's name there. We are inclined to think that Dharma was a relation of Sandhya's successors, and usurped the throne of Kamata in 1325, on the death of Pratapadhvaj, and assumed the title 'Kamatesvar.'

It is mentioned in the *Guru Charitra* that all the Bhuyans were subordinated to Dharma Narayan. This indicates that he fought with the local insubordinate petty chiefs who might have raised their heads during the reign of the usurper Pratapadhvaj. Dharma Narayan, after establishing complete peace and order in the country, turned his attention to fortifying his western frontiers against the future inroads of the followers of Islam. He built a new city near Dimla in the Rangpur district, the remains of which in the beginning of the nineteenth century are described as the following by Buchanan. "About two miles from a bend in the Tista, a little below Dimla, in the Rangpur district, are the remains of a fortified city, said to have been built by Raja Dharmapala, the first king of the Pal dynasty in Kamarupa."¹ Buchanan is confused between two kings of the same name beginning with "Dharma." He is wrong to ascribe the Dimla erections to the Kamarupa king Dharmapal of the Pala dynasty, who was not the first king but the sixth if not the seventh. The founder of the city near Dimla had no relationship with the Pala kings of Kamarupa.²

Next Dharma Narayan removed his seat of Government to the newly constructed city, the fact having been referred to as due to the curse of the goddess Kamakhya in the *Guru Charitra*. Now Dharma Narayan assumed a new title "Gaudesvara" perhaps as a result of the annexation of certain territory from the kingdom of Gauda. In the meantime there occurred anarchy and confusion in the eastern part of his kingdom. A number

¹ J. A.S. B., 1878, p. 136 E. H. K., p. 248.

² E. H.K. p. 145.

of the Bhuyans under the leadership of Durlabh Narayan, the son of Pratapadvaj, became supreme in every village and challenged the authority of Dharma Narayan. This led to incessant hostilities between Durlabh Narayan and Dharma Narayan until after a considerable number of casualties on both sides, peace was concluded. According to the conditions of the treaty, the whole kingdom was divided into two, the northern and the eastern part with Kamatapur going to Durlabh Narayan and Dharma Narayan retaining the territories to the south including Rangpur and Mymensingh. It is said that after the meeting in which the treaty was concluded Dharma Narayan proceeded to Ghoraghat in the Rangpur district where his son Tamradhvaj received him. It appears that after this division of territories Durlabh Narayan became the "Kamatesvara" and Dharma Narayan styled himself only as "Gaudesvara."¹

This compromise between the two Hindu rulers had other reasons also. At that time the Tughluq Emperors of Delhi were very interested in controlling the disorderly state of affairs in Bengal. In 1328, the Emperor Muhammad Tughluq sent his all-powerful general Bahram Khan against the Bengal Sultan Bahadur Shah, who in the meantime had shaken off the imperial authority. In the battle Bahadur Shah was defeated and killed. Next the Delhi Emperor planned an invasion of the kingdom of Kamata.² This invasion took place in 1333, but was defeated and crushed at the outskirts of Kamata by Durlabh Narayan, Dharma Narayan's successor.³

Taking advantage of the chaos and disorder during the warfare in the country, a Bhuyan named Purusottamadasa assumed independence in central Kamrup (Kamrup district). In 1329, he issued a land-grant donating a village called Raut Kuchi, not far from the present Nalbari, to a Brahman named Dharmakara. It is said in the grant that Vasudeva, grandfather of Purusottamadasa, was the right hand of the king of Kamrup

¹ E. H. K. pp. 247-8, based on Ramcharan Thakur's *Guru Charitra* edited by Hari Narayan Datta Barua, Nalbari, 1955

² H. B. V. II, p. 89.

³ *Alamgirnama* p. 731, M. N. E. F. P. p. 61.

and that he always marched at the head of a thousand swordsmen at the side of the king. He may have been the contemporary of the king Sandhya or his successor Sindhu Rai. Jayadevasa, the father of the assignee, is said to have been the lotus of his own race and possessed the characteristic qualities of the Aryan. This indicates that he was a high class Hindu. Puru-sottama is said to have obtained the glory of sovereignty by dint of his valour and heroism. This shows that he had to fight for his supremacy against neighbouring chiefs.¹

Dharma Narayan's reign in the eastern part of Kamata ended in 1330, but he may have ruled up to a later period in the Bengal districts of Rangpur, Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri. The sage Kendu Kulai is said to have lived in his reign. Dharma was succeeded by his son Tamradhvaj, who established himself at Ghoraghat in the Rangpur district. Gait states, on the basis of some unspecified sources which are not available to us, that Dharma Narayan was succeeded in turn by Padma Narayan, Chandra Narayan and others, ending with Ram Chandra,² but we cannot identify any of them with any rulers of medieval Kamata.

Durlabh Narayan (1330-50) :

At the death of Durlabh Narayan's father, Pratapadhvaj, in 1325, Dharma Narayan usurped the throne of Kamata. It is mentioned in the *Guru Charitra* that, after some time, Durlabh with the help of the local chiefs, seized a part of Dharma Narayan's territory and established his headquarters at a place called Garia, nine hours' journey from the modern city of Cooch Behar. This led to his rivalry with Dharma Narayan and a war continued for a certain period between them. At last a treaty was concluded in which he became the master of the whole of the eastern part of the kingdom of Kamata.³ Gunabhiram informs

¹ S. H. K. V. 1. p. 247.

² H. A. p. 17.

³ E. H. K. p. 248.

us that at this time⁴ seven families of Brahmins and seven families of Kayasthas were sent by the Gaudesvara to Kamata. Among the Kayasthas, Chandibar was the most cultured and learned, and hence he was made the leader of all. It is said that the descendants of the main twelve families of these immigrants were known in later times as "Twelve Bhuyans" in Assam. The great Vaisnava reformer Sankar Dev was the great-great-grandson of Chandibar, who was called the "Siromani Bhuyan" (or the leader), on account of his special qualities.²

It is mentioned in the Deodhai Assam Buranji that, in 1332, Sukhrangpha ascended the throne of the Ahom kingdom. He appointed his step-brother Chao Pulai, the son of Rajani, the Kamata princess, the "Saring Raja" (heir-apparent). Chao Pulai conspired with Bargohain Taphrikhin against Sukhrangpha to dethrone him. But, the plot having been detected, both the conspirators fled to the Kamata king, who was the relative of Chao Pulai.³ Barua says that this Kamata king was no other than Durlabh Narayan.⁴ He is correct, because this is confirmed from the Muhammadan chronicles. In 1332, Durlabh Narayan advanced with a large army for the cause of Chao Pulai, who was his nephew. The Kamata army first advanced to Athgaon, and then cautiously moved to Saring and constructed a fort there. But in the meantime Durlabh got information that the Delhi Emperor Muhammad Bin Tughluq had sent an expedition consisting of 100,000 cavalry to invade Kamata. The imperial army entered the frontier of Kamata through Mymensingh, which at that time formed the border of Durlabh's kingdom. Immediately Durlabh returned to the capital and despatched a large army to resist the imperialists. It is said in the

¹ The seven Brahmin Families : Krishna Pandit, Rambar, Lohar, Bayan, Dharam, Mathura and Raghupati.

The seven Kayastha Families : Hari, Srihari, Sripati, Sridhar, Chidananda, Sadananda and Chandibar.

² Gunabhiram, A. B. p. 48.

³ D. A. B. p. 9.

⁴ E. H. K. p. 251.

Alamgirnamah that the grand army of the Emperor was entirely defeated and perished at the hands of the Assamese warriors.¹ The above fact is further confirmed by a number of coins of Md. Bin Tughluq dated 1332-33, which were found by Stapleton in the vicinity of Enayetpur in Mymensingh, in 1910.² This leads to the conclusion that the first invasion of Muhammad Bin Tughluq was attempted through Mymensingh, which was the frontier of Durlabh's kingdom in that direction. It is further mentioned in the *Alamgirnamah* that to avenge the defeat mentioned above, Muhammad Bin Tughluq sent another expedition of a similar size, to invade the kingdom of Kamata. This time the expedition may have been despatched through North Bengal. It is said that "when it arrived in Bengal, it was panic-stricken and shrank from the enterprise."³ It may well mean that the army was defeated by the Kamata troops before penetrating the country.

Durlabh Narayan was one of the most energetic and influential kings of Kamata. He had an earnest desire for culture and learning. His royal court was adorned with many eminent scholars and poets such as Hema Sarasvati, Kaviratna Sarasvati, and Haribar Bipra. The poems of the three latter survive, and are among the glories of early Assamese literature. He was probably the only king of Kamata who was acknowledged as the sovereign over all the Bhuyans of the eastern part of the kingdom. During the rule of Durlabh, the mountain tribes of Bhutan made occasional raids in the north-eastern part of Kamrup, but how the king drove them all away from his kingdom with the help of Chandibar is elaborately described in the *Guru Charitra*. He maintained good relations with the Ahom king up to the end of his reign. He ruled up to 1350.

¹ *Alamgirnamah*, P. 731, M. N. E. F. P. p. 61.

² J. A. S. B. 1922, p. 425.

³ *Alamgirnamah*, p. 731, M. N. E. F. P. p. 61.

Indra Narayan (1350-65) :

Durlabh Narayan was succeeded by his son Indra Narayan in 1350. It is mentioned in the "Jayadratha Vadha" that, through the blessing of Siva, Indra Narayan would be the "Pancha Gau-desvara."¹ Perhaps this refers to the fact that this king wrested the western half of Kamata territory from the control of Dharma Narayan's successor.

Banarjee² and Bhattacharyya³ contend that Sikandar Shah, the Bengal Sultan, invaded Kamata in 1357. The authority for this statement is a silver coin bearing the name of Sikandar Shah minted at "Chawalistan urf (alias) Kamru" and dated 759 A. H. (A. D. 1357-58).⁴ This invasion is not mentioned by any of the sources, either Muslim or local. Following Stapleton's surmise that Sikandar's activities were confined to the north of Mymensingh, east of the Brahmaputra, which constituted a part of Kamarupa, and that the coin was minted in that part of the above district, Barua says that the conquest of Kamrup by Sikandar as recorded in the coin of 759 A. H. is an empty boast.⁵ This seems a correct judgment, and we believe that the alleged invasion never took place for the following reasons :

Bhattacharyya's theory that Sikandar advanced as far as the Bar Nadi is unreasonable. His statement is that : "Sikandar succeeded to the throne about the year 1356 (A. H. 758) and, a year after, launched an attack on Kamrupa. The time was very opportune. The reigning Kamrupa king was involved in a quarrel with the Ahom monarch Sukhrangpha, and could not offer serious opposition to the foreign invader,"⁶ This is not

¹ E. H. K. p. 250.

² Banerjee R. D. Banglar Itihas, Vol. II, p. 149.

³ M. N. E. F. P. p. 63.

⁴ Catalogue of Coins in Indian Museum, Vo. II, p. 152.

⁵ E. H. K. p. 234-5.

⁶ M. N. E. F. P., p. 63.

true. Sikandar succeeded to the throne not in 1356 (A. H. 758) but in 1357 (A. H. 759), at the death of his father Sultan Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah.¹ Bhattacharyya's contention that Kamata king at that time was otherwise engaged and could not offer resistance to Sikandar is incorrect, because we have already shown that Chao Pulai's plot against his half-brother Sukhrangpha took place in 1332, just after the latter's succession, when there was indeed a Muslim invasion, but sent by Muhammad Bin Tughluq.² We have no alternative but to dismiss Bhattacharyya's arguments as baseless, since he argues in favour of a large scale invasion, otherwise unrecorded, on the strength of a single ambiguous coin. Equally untenable is the contention of Banerjee. He did not take into consideration the fact that, in 1357, Sikandar cannot have invaded Kamata, as that year proved a very tragic one for him. In that year he lost his father, and immediately after ascending the throne he had to fight against the Sultan of Delhi.³

Realising the weaknesses of the above arguments, Sarkar cleverly says that the conquest and the occupation of the city had taken place previous to this year, presumably in Ilyas Shah's reign, for Sikandar immediately on his accession had to fight against the Sultan of Delhi.⁴ But this scholar also seems prejudiced. From an unbiased study of the history of Bengal at this period we get the impression that at that time it was impossible for the Bengal Sultan even to think of the invasion of such a distant country, not to speak of its actual undertaking. In A. H. 755 (or A. D. 1355) Sultan Feroz Shah left Bengal after his one year's siege of the capital.⁵ The year 1356 proved most fateful to the Bengal Sultan. During the whole year his only recorded activity was to send valuable presents to the court of Delhi for the

¹ Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, H. B. II, pp. 110-11.

² See pp. 160-61.

³ H. B. Vol. II, pp. 110-11.

⁴ Ibid. p. 110.

⁵ Barni, Tarikh-i-Feroz Shahi, Banerjee R. D., Banglar Itihas, Vol. II. p. 136.

satisfaction of the imperialists. Moreover, Feroz's greed for the elephants of Bengal cost the Sultan of Lakhnawati dear. In these circumstances it was hardly possible for Sikandar to undertake an expedition to Kamata in which the journey involved was most strenuous and hard for the people of the plains. Nothing is known of the later events of Indra Narayan's reign. It seems that at the end of his rule, some unruly elements raised their heads in the kingdom, as a result of which the ruling king Indra Narayan had to part with his royal throne and insignia.

After the middle of the fourteenth century the history of Kamata is most uncertain. We have seen that Durlabh Narayan was succeeded by his son Indra Narayan, but we do not know who was the successor of the latter. It is mentioned in the Ahom Buranji that the Kamata king again came into conflict with the Ahom king Sudangpha, who ruled at the close of the fourteenth century. It is stated that one Tao Sulai, who was the paramour of Sudangpha's queen, took shelter with the Kamata king, who refused to surrender the fugitive on the demand of the Ahom king.¹ This king of Kamata must have been a successor of Indra Narayan and have ruled at the end of the fourteenth or the very beginning of the fifteenth century, because Sudangpha's rule ended in 1407.

Sasanka alias Arimatta (1365—85):

It is mentioned in the Assam Buranji that a new line of kings founded by Sasanka or Arimatta, and followed successively by Gajanka, Sukranka and Mriganka, ruled from 1238 to 1478.² The Kamrupar Buranji also mentions the names of those kings in the same order.³ A grant published by Jenkins and a chronicle shown to him by a brahmin, also record these names.⁴ Gunabhiram mentions the names of the founder and of one of his sons, who died a premature death fighting with the Kacharis.⁵ After Indra Narayan,

¹ A. H. B., p. 50.

² Haliram, A. B., p. 12.

³ Ibid.

⁴ J. A. S. B. 1840, pp. 766-67.

⁵ Gunabhiram, A. B. pp. 40-41.

the regular line ended and an era of upstarts and adventurers followed. Indra Narayan himself may have been killed by an adventurer. The various chronicles confirm that this usurper was no other than a king named Sasanka or Arimatta. He is said to have become king of Kamata after a long career of struggles and military engagements.

There are numerous conflicting legends concerning him. It appears from the legends that he was a powerful king. The genealogy of the Rajas of Dimarua states that one Somapala of Pratapapura married Harmati, who, being united with the Brahmaputra, gave birth to Arimatta. In one of his exploits he is said to have killed his father and, in order to atone for his sin, he went to the Brahma Kunda with the dead body ; this had to be cremated, owing to decomposition, on the way, somewhere near Sadiya, and Arimatta reached the Kunda with only his father's ashes. The people of Pratapapura, along with another son of Somapala, went to Dimarua and settled there.¹ It is stated in the Haragauri Vilasa that Bhagadatta was followed by Dharmapala and Chandrapala. The latter's son Arimatta had three daughters Dharmavati, Avanti and Jayanti. From the above it seems that there were more than one Bhagadatta in the history of Kamrup and Kamata.²

It is mentioned in the Kamarupar Vangsavali that one Ram Chandra was the fourteenth in descent from Jitari.³ Hannay identifies Jitari with Dharmapala and holds that his kingdom was in central Assam and the dynasty became extinct with Sukranka.⁴ It is further told in the Vangsavali that one Arimatta was born of the princess of the house of Ram Chandra. It is stated there that he ruled at Vaidyargarh until 1238. Gunabhiram holds that he was of Nagakhya line and further refers to the tradition which ascribes the foundation of Vaidyargarh at Betna in Kamrup to one Phengua.⁵

¹ R. P. H. R. A., p. 19.

² H. C. P. A., p. 192.

³ J. A. S. B., 1848, p. 464

⁴ Ibid

⁵ H. C. P. A., p. 194

The account given in the Bhuyar Puthi states that Ratnapura in the Majuli was founded by one Ranga and one of his descendants, Anga was killed while fighting in the Mahabharata war. Yudhisthira and his descendants are said to have ruled in Kamrup down to Pratap, who was succeeded by his son Mayamatta in Ratnapura, who had two sons Arimatta and Nagamatta and a daughter. Mayamatta's kingdom was divided between his two sons, and in the western part Arimatta's minister, Samudra built the city of Visvanatha. Mayamatta was killed by Arimatta while he was hunting. Arimatta then placed his minister in charge of the kingdom with Manohara, the son of the minister, at Visvanatha, and after his pilgrimage Arimatta drowned himself in the Dikhau river. The minister and his son ruled for some time in Visvanatha. The latter's daughter Lakshmi, had two sons Santanu and Samanta ; both of these had twelve sons, each reigning for some time.¹ According to another tradition Mayuradhvaj of the race of Siva ruled the territory between Visvanatha and Subansiri and had his capital at Ratnavatipura. His son Tamradhvaj followed him, and was succeeded by Pratappuriya, who married Harmati, daughter of Haravinda, a descendant of *Irabhatta* of Saumara ; as a result of her union with the Brahmaputra, Arimatta was born at Visvanatha ; he extended his kingdom to Bhutan and Nepal, until at last he killed his father and committed suicide.² By another tradition collected by Wade, Arimatta is said to have defeated and killed the Kamata king, Durlabhendra, and himself became the Kamatesvar. Then he killed Phengua Konwar (prince), a nephew of Durlabhendra, and overthrew Ram Chandra, a local chief, who ruled somewhere in the modern district of Darrang.³ The account given in the Assam Buranji states that Arimatta was defeated and killed by one Phengua, who was a relation of the Kamata king. It is said that, after killing Ari-

¹ R. P. H. R. A. pp. 20—21

² R. P. H. R. A., p. 21.

³ Wade J. P., An Account of Assam, p. 180.

matta, Phengua built a new capital with embankments in the Dhamdhama mauza of Kamrup, and named it Phenguagarh.¹ According to Kamrupar Buranji, Arimatta was a son of the Brahmaputra by a Sudra damsel in the kingdom of Ram Chandra. Arimatta first defeated and killed Durlabhendra and became the king of Behar. Thence he came to Kamrup and after killing its king Ram Chandra founded his capital at Vaidyargarh. Then he shifted his capital to Pratappur north of Visvanath and from this he ruled the whole of Kamrup. A nephew of Durlabhendra, Phengua by name, settled himself in a house near the palace and intrigued with one of the queens of Arimatta through the help of a florist. Arimatta having detected this, ruthlessly killed Phengua along with his friends and the whole family of the florist. The chiefs and nobles of the country strongly protested against his cruelty, when Arimatta committed suicide in disgust and remorse.² It is stated in the Kashmir chronicles that king Jayapida, grandson of Muktapida Lalitaditya, who overthrew Yasovarman of Kanauj in the eighth century, came as far as Pundravardhana and led an expedition against a neighbouring king of Nepal named Arimudi or Arimuri.³ A writer in the Calcutta Review indentified this Arimuri with Arimatta and thus placed him towards the close of the eighth century.⁴ Vasu seems to have identified Arimatta with Rayarideva who ruled at the end of the twelfth century.⁵ Choudhury suggests that the extensive conquests made by Arimatta in Assam and Bengal and the establishment of his capital at Visvanatha and Ratnapura in Upper Assam, along with the creation of a fortification called Vaidyargarh, lead us to believe that he was the same as Vaidyadeva, who established himself in Assam after dethroning Tingyadeva in 1138.⁶ The contention of Choudhury deserves no doubt very high appreciation. Vasu's conjecture on the iden-

¹ Haliram, A. B., pp. 11-12.

² S. H. K. V. I, pp. 229-31.

³ M. A. Stein, Kalhana's Chronicles of the Kings of Kashmir, I, Westminster, 1910, pp. 170-71

⁴ C. R. 1867.

⁵ S. H. K. Vol. 1 pp. 229-31.

⁶ H. C. P. A. p. 203.

tification of Arimatta with Rayarideva on the grounds of a certain similarity in the names of the two kings does not stand logical study. Arimatta is a title having no relation with the previous name. The views of Choudhury that the story of the birth of Arimatta as a result of his mother Harmati's union with the Brahmaputra is obviously absurd, and that this implies that Ram Chandra was not at all the father of Arimatta are equally true.¹ But there are still many difficulties in the tradition. It seems to us that there was more than one Arimatta in the history of Kamarupa and Kamata. The Arimatta in question here is altogether different from that of Choudhury and Vasu. We are inclined to think of Arimatta as a local Bhuyan. He killed Indra Narayan, the last ruler of the Pratap's line, and founded a new line in the second half of the fourteenth century, and his three successors Gajanka, Sukranka and Mriganka ruled up to the middle of the fifteenth century. Though the fortifications at Vaidyargarh were no doubt founded in 1138 by Vaidyadeva, who, as Choudhury contended, was also known as Arimatta, we believe it was Arimatta alias Sasank, who dethroned Indra Narayan, and made proper additions and repairs to the fortifications. We can agree with Choudhury when he says that the tradition that Phengua killed Arimatta through the help of the latter's wife is of doubtful historicity. But we shall not accept his contention that Phengua was an invader from Bengal, probably of the Sena family, i. e. of Vijayasena or Lakshmanasena, until the genealogy of the Sena rulers is traced up to the middle of the fourteenth century. Phengua, we believe, had nothing to do with Arimatta alias Vaidyadeva. We have strong ground to believe that Phengua was a relation of the Kamata king, who was killed and dethroned by Arimatta. He was no doubt a powerful contestor of Arimatta, for all the chronicles are unanimous as to the erection of Phenguagarh by Phengua in Dhamdhama mauza in Kamrup. He might have been killed by Arimatta himself. Choudhury seems to be correct when he contends that the three rulers mentioned after Arimatta : Gajanka,

Sukranka and Mriganka, must either have been the descendants of Vaidyadeva or have been related to Vallabhadeva.¹ Because we have already shown that, with the rule of Pratapadhvaj, a different line from that of Vaidyadeva or Vallabhadeva took power. Arimatta is said to have usurped the throne on the death of Indra Narayan, the last ruler of that line.

In the Sahari mauza in Nowgong there are some remains of an old fort with high embankments known as the Jangalgarh. This is alleged to have been the capital of Jangal Valahu, another son of Arimatta, who is said to have fought with and to have been defeated by the Kacharis and later to have drowned himself in the Kalang river.² Choudhury suggests that Jangal Valahu, Ratna Singha and Gajanka are the various names of the same person.³ The Rajas of Dimarua claim their descent from Arimatta. Arimatta is said to have subdued the local chiefs in eastern Kamrup, who had previously thrown off the yoke of the Kamata hegemony. The tradition current throughout Assam that Arimatta killed his father can be explained by the supposition that he killed Indra Narayan, the last ruler of Pratapadhvaj's line.

Gajanka (1385-1400) :

Arimatta was succeeded by his son Gajanka. Nothing is known as to the events of his reign. Barua contends that Arimatta was succeeded by Sukaranka or Sukranka.⁴ But he is not correct. We shall show later that Sukranka was the second successor of Arimatta. In the land grant published by Jenkins, the names Minanka (or Arimatta), Gujanka, Sukananka, Minanka are given in this order.⁵ Haliram also refers

¹ H. C. P. A., p. 203.

² Gunabhiram, A. B., p. 41-42.

³ H. C. P. A., p. 197.

⁴ E. H. K. p. 257.

⁵ J. A. S. B., 1840, p. 767.

to them in the above order.¹ Moreover Barua's statement that the Ahom king Sudangpha despatched an expedition against the son and successor of Arimatta does not seem reasonable. It is mentioned in the *Buranji* that Sudangpha came to the throne in the year 1397. Immediately after his accession, he had to fight hard against the Tipamiyas and at the conclusion of the struggle he married a daughter of one of their chiefs named Khuntai. The girl, while in her father's house, became enamoured of a Tipamiya named Tao Sulai. The latter, with a view to challenge Sudangpha, went to Surunpha, the Nara king, and asked for his help. An engagement took place, in which Sudangpha was successful. Next Tao Sulai took shelter with the contemporary Kamata king, who supported his cause, and attacked the Ahom king. In our opinion all these events could not have taken place within a period of about three years, (i. e. 1397—c. 1400). So we prefer to suggest that the invasion of the Ahom kingdom by the Kamata king took place in the very beginning of the fifteenth century, when Sukranka, the son and successor of Gajanka, was ruling ; in this Barua agrees with us.

Sukranka (c. 1400-1415):

Gajanka was succeeded by his son Sukaranka or Sukranka in 1400. We have seen that it is mentioned in the *Buranji* that Tao Sulai, a Tipam chief, being unable to overpower Sudangpha, the Ahom king, went to the Kamata king and caused him to attack the kingdom of the Ahoms.² It is said that at that time the Kamata king was Sekhang, which is apparently the Ahom pronunciation of Sukranka. In the meantime the contemporary Bengal Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, taking advantage of this rivalry of the Kamata king with the Ahoms, attacked the kingdom of Kamata, when Sukranka was compelled to make peace with Sudangpha, giving his daughter Bhajani in marriage and asking military aid to fight the invaders. The combined Kamata and Ahom troops defeated the Mussal-

¹ Halirana, A. B., p. 12.

² D. A. B., p. 11.

mans and forced them to retreat beyond the river Karatoya.¹ The Deodhai Assam Buranji explicitly records the dowry given at the marriage of the daughter of Sukranka, the gifts being two elephants, and a number of horses, as well as a quantity of gold and silver.²

Mriganka (c. 1415-1440) :

Sukranka was succeeded by his son Mriganka in c. 1415. It is mentioned in the Buranji that Mriganka established his sway over the territory from the Karatoya in the west to Sadiya in the east. This seems to be obviously a reference to his victory over some neighbouring petty Bhuyans and chiefs and the annexation of their principalities to the kingdom of Kamata. He died childless, when the line of Arimatta came to the end.

It is mentioned in the Assam Buranji that after the death of Mriganka, the last ruler of the line of Arimatta, there ensued in Kamata a regime of confusion and disorder.³ The Kamrupar Buranji states that after the line of Arimatta, a new line of kings consisting of the three rulers, Niladhvaj chakradhvaj and Nilambar ruled the Kingdom of Kamata.⁴ Therefore it appears that, about the middle of the fifteenth century, after the extinction of the line of Arimatta, the ruling house of Kamata was supplanted by a dynasty Khan or Khyan by name, the founder of which was one Niladhvaj.

Niladhvaj (c. 1440-1460) :

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, Buchanan collected some legends of this king. It is said that there was a brahmin, who had a servant to look after his cattle. Many complaints were lodged by the neighbours against that cowherd for carelessness in his duty. One day he was found asleep in

¹ H. B. II, p. 118.

² D. A. B., p. 12.

³ Haliram, A. B. pp. 12-13.

⁴ K. R. B. p. 99.

the field by his master, while his cattle were destroying the crops of the neighbours. Intending to chastise the servant, when the brahmin approached the sleeping man, he marked the signs of fortune in his feet. He freed him immediately from his low service and obtained a promise from the cowherd to make him his minister when he became king. After a while there arose in the kingdom of Kamata a number of unruly and subversive elements, and the situation became favourable for an upstart. Accordingly the servant by dint of his strength and valour became supreme over all and assumed the title "Niladhvaj". He fulfilled his promise by appointing the brahmin as his minister.¹ Gunabhiram tells the above legend more or less in the same manner, but informs us at last that this is a popular tradition shorn of historical truth.² Vasu goes to the extreme and, on the grounds of the absence of the contemporary historical accounts, he doubts the very existence of this line of kings.³ But he is not correct. It is clearly mentioned in the Kamrupar Buranji that Niladhvaj, Chakradhvaj and Nilambar were the rulers over the Singmari region, up to the bank of the Brahmaputra opposite Hajo, and ruled from the city of Kamatapur. Moreover, this text does not mention the fantastic legend collected by Buchanan.⁴ So, it appears that Niladhvaj was originally a petty chief and from an ordinary position he assumed the power and dignity of a king by virtue of hard labour and prudent tact. This line of kings can thus be placed as the rulers of Kamata after the line of Arimatta the last representative of which ruled up to the year c. 1440. Niladhvaj perhaps assumed the title "Kamatesvar", after establishing his authority over the whole of Kamata. He brought many brahmins, perhaps the relations of his chief minister, from Mithila, and gave all facilities for their permanent settlement in his kingdom. He rebuilt and extended the city of Kamatapur by repairs and new constructions. His rule ended in c. 1460.

¹ Martin, *Eastern India*, Vol. III, pp. 408-09.

² Gunabhiram, A. B., pp. 44-45.

³ S. H. K. Vol. II, pp. 30-31.

⁴ K. R. B., p. 99.

Chakradhvaj (c. 1460-1480) :

A later Muslim work the *Risalat-us-Shuhada* treats of a certain general Ismail, who led a campaign against the king of Kamata. Sarkar has reasonably suggested that Ismail was the general of the Bengal Sultan Ruknuddin Barbak (1459-74).¹ In that case the invasion occurred in the reign of Chakradhvaj, as Barua informs us.² It is mentioned in the *Risalat-us-Shuhada* that the scene of operations against the *Kamatesvar* was the eastern part of the Dinajpur district.³ Sarkar suggests in this connection that the expedition was intended to effect the recovery of the territory to the west of the Karatoya lately overrun by the Kamrup forces.⁴ He appears to be correct, though we have no positive evidence. Kamata seems to have been flourishing at the time, and Bengal was suffering under the Habshi usurpers. Therefore it is quite likely that a certain part of the regions on the west bank of the Karatoya, within the division of Lakhnawati, were annexed to the kingdom of Kamata by either Niladhvaj, or his successor Chakradhvaj. Under Chakradhvaj, a great army was sent to contest the Muslims in a place near (Mahi) Santosh, in Dinajpur. The Muslim source admits that Ismail was defeated at the hands of the Kamata army; we are told, however, that he succeeded in turning the tables by his magical powers, and finally captured the king of Kamata, who was converted to Islam. Sarkar, having found the site of the burial of Ismail at Pirgunj, in Rangpur to the east of the Karatoya, conjectures that the Kamata troops were subsequently withdrawn from that area,⁵ as a result of Ismail's victory. But he is not correct, for Ismail is said to have died in 1474, and a few years after this Nilambar, the son and successor of Chakradhvaj, constructed some fortifications at Ghoraghat in the Rangpur district.⁶ Buchanan also records a tradition

¹ H. B. Vol. II. p. 134.

² E. H. K. p. 263.

³ J. A. S. B. 1874, pp. 216-39.

⁴ H. B. Vol. II, p. 134.

⁵ H. B. Vol. II, p. 134.

⁶ Gunabhiram, A. B. p. 45.

that Nilambar became the king over the Matsya kingdom, which he identified with North Bengal.¹ Moreover, Sarkar himself in another place informs us that "the indecisive war fought by Barbak with the ruler of Kamatapur followed by the loss of considerable territory on the eastern bank of the Karatoya."² Gait does not acknowledge the tradition of Ismail's alleged victory over the king of Kamatapur³, since it is not corroborated by other sources.

Nilambar (c.1480-1498)..

On the death of Chakradhvaj in 1480, Nilambar ascended the throne of Kamata. This king appears to have been very powerful and his kingdom is said to have extended from the Karatoya to the Barnadi.³ Gait collects from unnamed sources which are not available to us the statement that Nilambar conquered and annexed to his dominion the north-eastern part of the region which previously belonged to the Muhammadan rulers of Gauda,⁴ which at the time was suffering anarchy at the hands of the Abyssinians or Habshis. We are led to think that Nilambar fully utilised the confusion and disorder of the slave epoch in the kingdom of Gaur for military conquests and territorial annexations during the first decade of his reign. He consolidated his conquests by building a military road from his capital to his frontier fortress of Ghoraghat on the Karatoya. He also did much to improve communications and, amongst other works, this magnificent road deserves special attention, for a portion of it still forms part of the main road between Cooch Behar, Rangpur and Bogra.⁵

Bhattacharyya contends that both Barbak's struggles with the Khyan king of Kamata in 1473 and Husain's expedition against Nilambar in 1498 took place in the reign of Nilambar.⁶

¹ Martin, Eastern India, p. 410. Vol. III.

² H. B. II, p. 146.

³ Martin, Eastern India, p. 410. Vol. III.

⁴ H. A. p. 44.

⁵ H. B. II, p. 146.

⁶ M. N. E. F. P. p. 65.

But we cannot agree with him. If Nilambar fought with Ismail in 1483, he must have ascended the throne by the sixties of the fifteenth century. If he had been a youth of at least twenty years on his accession, Nilambar would have been an old man of about sixty years by the time of Husain's invasion. But the military genius he displayed in fighting the Muslim generals, and his many other activities, do not suggest an elderly man. Moreover a reign of about four decades for a dethroned king appears to be too long. We have suggested that Nilambar's accession occurred about 1480 and Ismail's invasion in the reign of his immediate predecessor.

In 1498, Alauddin Husain, the Sultan of Gaur (1493-1519), led a vigorous campaign with a view to recovering the lost territory and putting a permanent stop to the Khyan aggression. This invasion is alleged to have been instigated by Nilambar's brahmin minister, whose licentious son had been brutally murdered by that king.¹ But this popular belief cannot stand in the light of logical study. Husain came to the throne in 1493 after a regime of Abyssinian disorganisation. For the first few years of his reign, he engaged himself on the internal consolidation of the kingdom. Next he wanted to take military action against the frontier powers who had availed themselves fully of the confusion and disorder of the slave rule in Gaur. According to the *Riyaz-us-Salatin* Husain invaded Kamata or Kamrup after his conquest of Orissa.² Next he is said to have conquered Tipperah and other frontier territories. A powerful ruler such as Husain could not forgive a non-Muslim whose ambition and enterprise had cost considerable territorial loss to his own kingdom. So Husain appears to have invaded Kamata according to a careful plan, and for very good reasons of state. The story of Nilambar's renegade minister inciting Husain to invade Kamata for no other reason than a desire for revenge is quite incredible.

¹ Martin, *Eastern India*, pp. 410-11. Vol. III.

² Abdus Salam, *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, pp. 132-133. J. A. S. B., 1894, p. 179.

It is stated in the *Buranji* that the Muslim army was led by one Dulal Gaji, son-in-law and general of Husain.¹ According to the *Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah* the invading army comprised twenty four thousand infantry and cavalry and a numerous flotilla.² The city of Kamatapur was strongly fortified and the siege dragged on, according to the tradition collected by Buchanan, for twelve years. The Muslim forces finally gained entrance into the capital by means of treachery. All attempts and efforts of the invading army having failed, the commander informed Nilambar of his desire of making peace and leaving of the country on the most friendly terms. This having been accepted, it was agreed that the ladies of the Muslim chiefs should pay their respects to the queen of Nilambar. By means of this subterfuge some soldiers were introduced into the city in litters, and with their aid it was captured. Nilambar himself was taken prisoner and carried to Gaur, but he made his escape en route.³ Whatever the truth of this rather improbable tradition, it seems clear that the success of the Muslims had been gained against the Kamata king after a long and hard battle. The city of Kamatapur was eventually destroyed and the adjoining territory up to Hajo was annexed to the kingdom of Gauda. Four local chiefs named Rup Narayan, Ghosal Khan, Mal Kumar and Lukshmi Narayan, who were probably Bhuyans, submitted to Husain's suzerainty.⁴ A colony of Afghans was left in Kamata, who dispossessed the Hindu chiefs and took up the civil and military administration under the viceroyalty of Husain's son.⁵ The *Buranji* mentions him as Dulal Gaji or Chandan Gaji, perhaps a corruption of Prince Daniyal.⁶ But the victory of the Muslims was a transitory event. As soon as the rainy season commenced, the king came with a big army and surrounded the Muslims and succeeded in killing all of them who had not been made prisoners in the hands of the Kamata soldiers.⁷ The *Buranjis* also state

¹ Haliram, A. B. p. 13.

² *Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah*, Shihab-Uddin-Talish, J. A. S. B. 1872, p. 79.

³ Martin, *Eastern India*, p. 411. Vol. III.

⁴ *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Abdus Salam, J. A. S. B., 1894, p. 179.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Haliram, A. B. p. 13, K. R. B. p. 100.

⁷ *Alamgirnamah Muhammad Saqui*, Translated by H. Vansittart, p. 72.

the names of Masandar Gaji, Kalu Dewan and Sultan Ghius uddin, possibly other generals of Husain. The latter is said to have built a mosque at Hajo and was buried near it. This place is still considered sacred by local Muhammadans, who regard it as "Poa Mecca", or (one fourth of Mecca).¹ This Muslim regime has left the darkest memories in the traditions of the country. Buranjists refer to it as an era of temple-breaking and propagation of Islam in Assam. The demolition and destruction of the temples at Kedarnath and Umananda are ascribed to the credit of the founder of the "Poa Mecca." Husain celebrated his success by the building of a Madrasah at Malda, the inscription of which bears a date corresponding to March, 1502.²

With the overthrow of Nilambar, the rule of the Kamata kings in Kamrup came to an end. It is very likely that when Kamatapur was sacked, Nilambar fled. He is heard of no more. After a while the Bhuyan chiefs combined under the leadership of the most powerful against the Muslim hegemony, and, taking advantage of the rainy season, attacked Daniyal's garrison and cut it off to the last man.⁴ It is mentioned in the Assam Buranji that, in 1505, Suhung received the Bhuyans in his court, and established permanent cultural relations with them.⁵ So we believe that the Muslims were defeated and driven away by the Bhuyans with the aid of the Ahom king before 1505.

When treating this period the Assam Buranji records a romantic legend of a Gauda princess named Susuddhi, who is said to have been married to a Kamata king,⁶ and whose amorous adventures resulted in further Muslim invasions. The account contains no circumstantial detail and neither its dates nor its subject matter are consistent with other Buranjis. There seems

¹ Haliram, A. B. p. 14.

² K. R. B. p. 100.

³ J. A. S. B., 1874, p. 303.

⁴ Riyazu-s-salatin, Abdus Salam, Cal, 1890. pp. 132-33. J. A. S. B. 1894, p. 179.

⁵ Tamuli Phukan, K. N., A. B., p. 20

⁶ Bhuyan S. K. A. B., pp. 14-24.

to be no ground for believing this story, which has no echo in more reliable historical accounts, such as the Muslim chronicles and Vangsavalis. Hence, we do not refer at length to this tradition, the study of which in this context would be, we feel, a waste of time and space.

It is mentioned in the Kamrupar Buranji that a Kamrup king named Nagaksha built Bilvesvar temple in 1521.¹ The Assam Buranji states that a Kamata king Durlabh by name was killed by Bisva Singha.² It is recorded in the Rudra Singhar Buranji that Sucharuchand, son and successor of Durlabhendra, was dethroned and driven away in 1555, by Nara Narayan.³ All these statements lead us to think that, soon after the beginning of the sixteenth century, Husain's troops left at Kamrup were annihilated or expelled by the local chiefs aided by the Ahom king, and a new king of Kamata, whether a member of the Khen royal house or another, gained the throne of Kamata. We are inclined to think that that ruler was no other than Nagaksha of the Kamrupar Buranji.⁴ He must have ruled at least up to the year 1521. We believe that this ruler and his successors must have ruled contemporaneously with the early Koches over a tract in eastern Kamrup under the vassalage of the Ahom kings, when Bisva Singha and Nara Narayan were consolidating their supremacy over the western half of Kamata. He was succeeded by his son Durlabh or Durlabhendra, who was contemporary to Bisva Singha, the founder of the Koch regime. In an engagement Durlabh must have been killed by Bisva Singha and his kingdom must have been annexed by the latter. Durlabh's reign might have been ended by 1540. On the death of his father in the hands of the Kochs, Sucharuchand may have taken shelter with the Ahom king Suhummung or his successor Suklenmung. With the help of the latter, Sucharuchand may have succeeded

¹ K. R. B, p. 100.

² Gumabhiram, A. B., p. 54.

³ Amanatulla, Kochbeharer Itihas, Coochbehar, 1936, p. 103.

⁴ K. R. B. p. 100.

in declaring himself Kamata king and exercising power over an eastern tract of Kamrup. In 1555, the king of Kamata, probably Sucharuchand, was defeated in a battle with the Koches, when his territory was permanently annexed to the Koch dominion by Nara Narayan.

Dharmapala of Visvanath:

The Kamarupar Buranji mentions that after the extinction of the ancient line of the kings of Kamarupa, there ruled a king named Dharmapala, who was defeated by Maunavati or Mayanamati, wife of Manichandra, a brother of Dharmapala. After routing Dharmapala Maunavati became the ruler of Kamarupa. She was succeeded by her son, Gopichandra, and the latter by his son, Bhavachandra, who had his capital at Chutiya-pura in Kamarupa.¹

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, Buchanan-Hamilton, after visiting some ruins in North Bengal, ascribed them to Gopichandra and his successors, and arrived at the conclusion that these rulers were in power just before the Khen dynasty of Kamata, which was ruling in the second half of the fifteenth century.² N. N. Vasu contends that on Dharmapala's death, in about A. D. 1075, his weak son Havachandra succeeded him. During the rule of the latter the whole land from Kamata to Kamarupa was lost.³

Arguments of these scholars have been refuted of late by some scholars of Bengal. Dr. D. C. Sen states that Govindachandra of Tirumalya and Gopichandra of the Bengal tradition are the two names of the same person, Gopichandra was a king of

¹ Bhuyan, S. K., *Kamarupar Buranji*, Gauhati, 1940, p. 99.

² Martin, M. *Eastern India*, London, 1838, Vol. III, pp. 406-07.

Vasu, N. N., *Social History of Kamarupa*, Calcutta, 1926 ; Vol. I, p. 215.

Vikrampur in the district of Decca, in the line of Srichandradeva, who ruled either at the end of the tenth or in the beginning of the eleventh century. Suvarnachandra, a king of this line built a 'suvarna-vihara' (golden monastery) at Navadvip.¹ B. Bhatta-Bhattacharya opines that though Gopichandra is credited with many a construction in North Bengal, his capital was at Tippera Meherkul. He believes that Gopichandra ruled in the beginning of the eleventh century.² Thus, the line of Dharmapala mentioned in the Kamarupar Buranji was altogether different from the Dharmapala dynasty of the Bengal tradition.

At the end of the tenth and in the beginning of the eleventh century, the Pala rulers, Brahmapala, and his son and successor, Ratnapala, were ruling over Kamarupa from their capital Sri-Durjaya on the bank of the Brahmaputra at the present site of North Gauhati. A king of this line named Dharmapala ruled from A. D. 1095-1120.³ Another king named Dharmadhvajapala alias Dhiranarayan ruled from his capital, Sadiya, over the Chutiya kingdom from A. D. 1504-1523.⁴ The historical accounts of these two kings are absolutely different from those of Dharmapala of the Kamarupar Buranji.

A grant published by Jenkins and a chronicle shown to him by a brahmin, record that Dharmapala was the predecessor of Vatupala and Somapala whose capital was at Kanyakā near Visvanath.⁵ The genealogy of the Rajas of Dimarua states that one Somapala of Pratapapura was father of Arimatta. A son of Somapala went to Dimarua with some people of Pratapapura and settled there.⁶ The Assam Buranji records that a new line

¹ Sen, D. C., *Gopichandrer Gan*, Calcutta, 1928, Vol. II, p. 3.

² Bhattacharyya, B., *Gopichandrer Gan*, Calcutta, 1928 ; Vol. II ; p. 3.

³ Choudhury, P. C., *History of the Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A. D.*, Gauhati, 1959, pp. 260-65.

⁴ Acharyya, N. N., *The History of Medieval Assam*, London, 1957 ; p. 227.

⁵ *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1840, pp. 766-b/.

⁶ Gait, E. A. R. P. H. R. A., p. 19

of kings founded by Sasanka or Arimatta and followed successively by Gajanka, Sukranka and Mriganka, ruled from A. D. 1238-1478.¹ Hannay has shown that Dharmapala and Sukranka belonged to the same family.² With the data at hand, it can easily be inferred that there was a king named Dharmapala who was connected with the line of Arimatta.

There is a hill in the district of Tippera, in East Bengal, called Mayanavati or Mayanamati. A number of traditions prevalent in Bengal, describe that King Gopichandra had his capital on that hill. The traditions appear to be correct when we see that the hill bears the same name with that of Gopichandra's mother. Thus it appears that Dharmapala, who was defeated by Maunavati or Mayanamati and succeeded by Gopichandra and Bhavachandra, had no bearing with the history of Kamarupa. The account of the Buranji that Bhavachandra's city was at Chutiyapara, can be explained by the supposition that Bhavachandra had very friendly relation with the king of Kamarupa, who might have received him as guest in the city of Chutiyapara, a place only seven miles away from North Gauhati. Many legends are prevalent of Bhavachandra, who appears to be in many occasions inconsistent. It may not be improbable to think that during his stay in Kamarupa, Bhavachandra might have caused a pleasure-house to be built at Chutiyapara with proper authority from the ruling king of Kamarupa, because of his regard and respect to the land of Kamakhya as a venue of Sakti worship.³

Dharmapala of the Kamarupar Buranji who is said to have been the predecessor of Maunavati or Mayanamati, Gopichandra and Bhavachandra appears to be of doubtful historicity. But the accounts of places such as Chutiyapara, Kanyaka, Vis-

¹ Dhekial Phukan, H. R. *Assam Buranji*, Calcutta, 1829, p. 12.

² *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1848, p. 464.

³ Law, B. C., *Indological Studies*, Allahabad, 1954, p. 79.

vanath, Pratapapura and Dimarua, and which can be identified with the places of the same name in present Assam, cannot be rejected forthwith simply on the ground of the absence of factual corroboration. The Assam Buranji, the genealogy of the kings of Dimarua, a land-grant published by Jenkins in 1840, and the conclusion of Hannay on the authority of certain epigraphic source, which was available to him in 1848, prove that Dharmapala of the Kamarupar Buranji was an important figure and was connected with numerous traditions of Assam. Though the accounts are vague and constitute uninvestigated recollections, Dharmapala and his successors, Vatupala and Somapala, seem to be in the line founded by Arimatta who ruled from A. D. 1365-1385, and exercised power up to the territory surrounding Visvanath on the north bank of the Brahmaputra.¹ As the rulers of the line of Dharmapala and the successors of Arimatta are equally connected with the lines of fortifications still in existence over an extensive area encircling the modern city of Visvanath, it would not be wide of the mark to conclude that Dharmapala belonged to the line of Arimatta.²

¹ Acharyya, N. N. *The History of Medieval Assam* London, 1957, pp. 155-61.

² Acharyya N. N., A Note on Dharmapala of Visvanath, *Journal of the University of Gauhati*, Vol. XIII, p. 55.

APPENDIX—“E”
Kings of Bengal

Eastern Bengal :

1. Fakhr-ud-din Mubarak shah	..	..	1336 or 1338
2. Ikhtiyar Uddin Ghazi Shah	..	..	1346—1352

Western Bengal and All Bengal:

Accession

1. Ala-ud-din Ali Shah	..	..	1339
2. Haji Shams-ud-din Iliyas Shah Bhangara	..	..	1345
3. Sikandar Shah	..	..	1357
4. Ghiyas-uddin, Azam Shah	..	..	1393
5. Saif-ud-din Hamza Shah	..	..	1410
6. Shihab-ud-din Bayazid	..	..	1412
7. Ganesh of Bhaturia (Kans Narayan)	..	..	1414
8. Jadu, alias Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah	..	..	1414
9. Danuja Mardana	..	..	1417
10. Mahendra	..	..	1418
11. Shams-ud-din Ahmad Shah	..	..	1431
12. Nasir-ud-din Mahmud Shah	..	..	1442
13. Rukn-ud-din Barbak Shah	..	..	1460
14. Shams uddin Yusuf Shah	..	..	1474
15. Sikandar Shah II	..	..	1481
16. Jalal ud-din Fath Shah	..	..	1481
17. Barbak the Eunuch, Sultan Shahzada	..	..	1486
18. Malik Indil Firuz Shah	..	..	1486
19. Nasir-ud-din Mahmud Shah II	..	..	1489
20. Sidi Badr, Shams-ud-din Muzaffar Shah	..	..	1490
21. Sayyid Ala-ud-din Husain Shah	..	..	1493
22. Nasir-ud-din Nusrat Shah	..	..	1518
23. Alauddin Firuz Shah	..	..	1533
24. Ghiyas ud-din Mahmud Shah	..	..	1533

25. Humayun, Emperor of Delhi	..	..	1538
26. Sher Shah Sur	..	..	1539
27. Khizr Khan	..	..	1540
28. Muhammad Khan Sur	..	..	1545
29. Khizr Khan, Bahadur Shah	..	..	1555
30. Ghiyas-ud-din Jalal Shah	..	..	1561
31. Son of preceding	..	..	1564
32. Taj Khan Kararani	..	..	1564
33. Sulaiman Kararani	..	..	1572
34. Bayazid Khan Kararani	..	..	1572
35. Daud Khan Kararani	..	..	1572—1576

At the death of Daud Khan Bengal became an integral part (under the Emperor of Delhi) of Mughal Empire.

Some powerful Bengal Chiefs :

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Isa Khan | East Central Dacca & Mymensing. |
| 2. Kedar Rái | Vikrampur |
| 3. Kandarpa Narayan | Chandradvip (Bakarganj) |
| 4. Pratapaditya | (Jessore) |

APPENDIX—"F"

Delhi Sultans since the beginning of the 13th Century A. D.

Slave dynasty: (1206-1290)

1. Qutb-ud- din Aibak	..	..	d 1210
2. Aram	..	..	d 1211
3. Ilbari Turk Shams-ud- din Iltutmish..	..	..	d 1236
4. Rukn-ud-din (deposed & killed)..	..	..	d 1236
5. Raziyya	..	..	d 1240
6. Muizuddin Bahram	..	..	d 1242
7. Alaudd in Masud	..	..	d 1246
8. Nasir-ud-din Mahamad	..	..	d 1266
9. Ghiyas-ud-din	..	..	d 1287
10. Muiz-uddin Kaiqubad	..	..	d 1290
11. Kayumars	..	..	---

Khalji Dynasty: (1290-1320)

1. Jalal-ud-din, Firuz Shah	..	..	d 1296
2. Rukn-ud-din, Iborahim deposed	..	..	d 1296
3. Ala-ud-din Sikandar Sani, Muhammad Shah..			d 1316
4. Shihab-ud-din Umar	..	..	d 1316
5. Qutab-ud-din Mubark	..	..	d 1320
6. Nasir-ud din Khusrav (usurper )..	..	..	d 1320

Tughluq dynasty: (1320-1413)

1. Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq Shah I	..	..	d 1325
2. Muhammad Jauna	..	..	d 1351
3. Firuz Shah	..	..	d 1388
4. Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq II Killed	..	..	1389
5. Abu Baqr . deposed..	..	..	1390
6. Nasir-ud-din Muhammad Shah	..	..	d 1394
7. Ala-ud-din Sikandar (Humayun Khan )	..	..	d 1394
8. Nusrat Shah (disputed Succession )	..	..	d 1399
9. Mahmud Shah	..	..	d 1413

Sayyid rulers :
(1414-1451)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----|----|-----------|
| 1. Khizr Khan | .. | .. | 1414-1421 |
| 2. Muiz-ud-din, Mubarak (killed) | .. | .. | d 1434 |
| 3. Muhammad Shah | .. | .. | d 1445 |
| 4. Ala-uddin, Alam Shah | .. | .. | d 1453 |

Lodi dynasty:
(1451-1526)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----|----|--------|
| 1. Bahlul Lodi | .. | .. | d 1489 |
| 2. Nizamkhan Sikondar Lodi | .. | .. | d 1517 |
| 3. Ibrahim Lodi | .. | .. | d 1526 |

MUGHAL RULERS:

- | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----|-----------|
| 1. Babur | .. | .. | 1526-1530 |
| 2. Humayun | Conflict | .. | 1530-1555 |
| Sher Shah | | | |
| 3. Akbar | .. | .. | 1555-1605 |
| 4. Jahangir | .. | .. | 1605-1627 |
| 5. Shah Jahan | .. | .. | 1627-1658 |
| 6. Aurangzeb Alamgir | .. | .. | 1658-1707 |

Mir Jumla invaded Assam in 1662.

CHAPTER VIII

THE KOCHES

In the early part of the nineteenth century, Buchanan estimated the numbers of the Koch people as three lacs and fifty thousand. In the middle of the same century, Hodgson observed that the number of the Koches could not be less than eight lacs souls, possibly even a million or a million and quarter.¹ At the present time the term Koch is applied to a good portion of the Hindu population of North Bengal and Western Assam. In Assam proper, it has become the name of a Hindu caste, into which the converts from the race of the Kachari, Lalung, Mikir and Garo are received. In North Bengal and Goalpara, they are known as Rajvangsis. In the days of the Puranas and Tantras, these people were called Kuvacha.

Racial origin :

Hodgson observed that in the Northern part of Bengal, towards Dalimkot, there appears to have been long located the most numerous and powerful people of the "Tamulian" extraction, which after the complete ascendancy of the Aryans had been established, was able to retain or recover political power or possession of the open plains.² As to their original habitat, Buchanan says that the primitive or Pani Koch live amid the woods, frequently changing their abode in order to cultivate land enriched by a fallow.³

Physical features :

The historian of Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji's invasion,

¹ Hodgson, B. H., Essay the first on Koch, Bodo and Dhimal tribes, Calcutta, 1847, p. 145.

² Ibid. p. 142.

³ Ibid. p. 146.

says that the features of "the Koch, Mech and Tharu tribes" resembled those of a tribe of Southern Siberia.¹ Hodgson is of the opinion that the Koches on or near the mountains, exhibit the Mongolian type of mankind more distinctly than the lowlanders, and that they have, in general, a paler yellower hue than the latter, among whom there are some nearly as black as the Negroes.² Buchanan classed the Koch with the Bodos and the Dhimals. Dalton observed them to be of Dravidian origin, while Risely held them to be an intermixture of Mongolian and Dravidian, the characteristics of the latter predominating. Gait states that the Koches are a Mongoloid race, very closely allied to the Meches and Garos. In Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Goalpara, the persons known as Rajvangsis are either pure Koches, who, though dark, have a distinctly Mongoloid physiognomy, or else a mixed breed, in which the Mongoloid element usually predominates.³

Early history and time :

It is mentioned in the Assam Buranji that after the overthrow of Nilambar, the last Kamata king, by the Muhammadans under the leadership of Husain Shah in 1498, two brothers named Chandan and Madan established a short government at Maralavasa, a place about thirty miles north of Kamatapur.⁴ Their power was only transient but seems to have extended over the major part of the kingdom of Kamata. At that time the parts of western Kamata which were not retained by Chandan and Madan, had fallen into anarchy under the chiefs of the neighbouring tribes. Among these tribes by far the most powerful were the Koches, who had a number of chiefs at first independent but who gradually united under the authority of one of themselves named Hajo. He seems to have been a person of great vigour, and reduced under his government the whole of

¹ T. N. p. 560.

² Hodgson, B. H., Essay the first on Koch, Bodo and Dhimal tribes, Calcutta, 1847, p. 150.

³ H. A. p. 47.

⁴ Gunabhiram, A. B., p. 52.

Rangpur, together with a large portion of Assam, included in the government of Kamrup.¹ Hajo had two daughters Hira and Jira, who were married to Haria Mandal, the leader of the twelve families of Moches (Panbar, Bhedela, Bhedbhedo, Barihana, Kathia, Guabar, Megho, Baihagu, Jesai, Garu Kata, Yuddhabar and Dekhera) of Chiknai Hill in the Khuntaghat Pargana of Goalpara district. Hira gave birth to a son named Bisu and Jira to another named Sisu.² From the above, it becomes apparent that Bisu and Sisu, the two sons of Haria Mandal, were born either at the end of the fifteenth or at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Bisva Singha : (1515-1540)

Bisu was a born hero. His superior intelligence and uncommon courage were manifested even in his childhood. He placed himself at the head of his followers and was joined by the men of the adjacent villages. As he grew up, he fought successfully with the neighbouring Bhuyans, Saru Bhuyan, Brahman Bhuyan, Chhuti Bhuyan, Kusum Bhuyan, Dighata Bhuyan, Kaliya Bhuyan, Jhargaya Bhuyan, Kabitas Bhuyan and Karnapur Bhuyan.³ It is interesting to note in this connection that he is said to have used firearms in the above battles with the different Bhuyans.⁴ From other references it would appear that by this time the use of firearms was becoming comparatively widespread in the region. Following up this success, he defeated and slew the Bhuyans of Fulguri and Bejiniya (Bijni).⁵ He gradually extended his power subduing the neighbouring chiefs one after another till he made himself the master of a dominion extending as far as the Karatoya in the west and the Barnadi

¹ Robinson, W. A. *Descriptive Account of Assam*, Calcutta, 1841, p. 152.

² D. A. B. pp. 160-1.

³ D. R. V. p. 16.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ D. R. V. p. 22.

in the east.¹ He made a magnificent city in Kochbehar as his capital,² and in 1527 assumed the name of Bisva Singha.³ He worshipped Siva and Durga and gave gifts to the disciples of Vishnu. He gave alms to the priests and astrologers, and also to the poor and to the visitors from distant countries. He made his younger brother Sisu Yuvaraj (heir-apparent), and appointed twelve ministers from the twelve chief families of the Koches mentioned above. He also introduced a regular state organisation by appointing Thakurias, Saikias, Hajaris, Umraos and Nawabs. Excluding the old and the young, he took an account of his able-bodied male subjects, and found that the number of persons fit to carry arms amounted to not less than fifty-two lakhs and twenty-five thousands. He possessed numberless elephants, horses, asses, buffaloes, and camels.⁴

Bisva Singha fought with and killed Durlabhendra, probably a representative of the family of Nilambar.

Bisva Singha's invasion of Assam:

It is mentioned in the Koch chronicles that Bisva Singha marched at the head of a large army against the Ahoms. After a long time and a hard journey, he ultimately reached Garhgaon, the capital of the Ahom king, with his vast army. It is said that he had to undertake this long journey with great hardships, which along with the shortness of provisions and great difficulty of obtaining further supplies, caused him to return to his capital without victory.⁵ Assamese chronicles give a different account of this expedition. According to the latter, it is said that, with the plan of invading Assam, Bisva Singha reached the Singari hill with a large navy, but he had to retreat owing to the shortage of provisions. But lest the Ahom king should take offence at this attack, he had to send an embassy praying for pardon and the

¹ Ibid. Introduction p. xiv.

² Ibid. p. 23.

³ D. A. B. p. 162.

⁴ D. R. V. pp. 26-49.

⁵ Ibid. pp. 40-41.

Ahom king at last granted him royal dignity.¹ According to the Deodhai and Ahom Buranjis, this occurrence took place in 1537.² In the above two chronicles, it is mentioned that Sisu and Bisu, sons of Sandia or Haria Mandal, coming from the hill Chiknai, offered Suhummung, the Ahom king, two horses, one white and the other grey, a pictured girdle, a large spotted fly-brush, twenty white fly-brushes, and a long string of pearls and coral. Making an offer of these things, they humbly spoke the following to the heavenly king : "We, your slaves, pray your Majesty to help us in time of difficulty. If you assist us when we are pressed hard, we, your slaves, promise to pay you annual tributes." Suhummung offered them some cows and buffaloes and ordered some of his men to accompany them.³ Bisva Singha died in 1540, a after rule of twenty-five years.

Gunabhiram, in the Assam Buranji, gives an account of the re-discovery of Kamakhya by Bisva Singha. The story runs that he went to Nilachala, where he found only a few houses of Meches. No one was at home except one old woman, who was resting under a fig-tree, where there was a mound which she said contained a deity. Bisva Singha prayed that reinforcements might arrive, and his prayer was at once granted. He, therefore, sacrificed a pig and a cock, and resolved, when the country could be restored to order, to build a golden temple there. He ascertained that the hill was the site of the old temple of Kamakhya, the ruins of which he discovered, while the image of the Goddess herself was dug up under the mound. Subsequently he re-built the temple, but, instead of making it of gold, he placed a gold coin between each brick. He brought brah-

¹ Barua, H. K. A. B., p. 28.

² D. A. B., p. 35.

³ A. H. B., p. 77.

mins from Kanauj, Mithila, Navadvip, Gaur and Banaras to perform religious caremonies at this and other temples. He made his vassals the chiefs of Dimarua, Beltala, Rani, Luki, Bagai, Pantan, Bako, Bangaon, Mairapur, Bholagaon, Chaygaon, Barnagar, Darrang, Karaibari, Atiabari, Kamatabari and Balarampur. He also made a treaty with Devadharma, the king of Bhutan. In the frontier of his dominion, he appointed officers called Ujir, Laskar, Bhuyan and Barua to save the subjects of the bordering territory from the raids of the neighbouring barbarians.¹ We know from Gunabhiram that in Bisva Singha's time Rangalugarh was the eastern boundary of Coochbehar.²

During the reign of Bisva Singha, there were hostilities more than once between the Ahoms and the Muhammadans, who advanced up the Brahmaputra as far as Kaliabar, and who, when finally defeated in 1532, were pursued by the Ahoms as far as Karatoya, the region which was at that time under the sway of Bisva Singha.³ The reason of Bisva Singha's non-intervention against the invaders may be that the Koch capital was far removed from the route taken by the Muhammadans and that, although he had defeated the local chiefs on both sides of the Brahmaputra as far east as the Barnadi, he does not appear to have consolidated at that time his rule and brought that part of the country under his direct administration.⁴

As regards the date of Bisva Singha's reign, the different authorities differ in their opinion. Buchanan says that "the Bihar Rajas reckon by the era of their ancestor Visva, whom they suppose began to govern in the Bengal year 916 or A. D. 1509." Prasiddha Narayan's Vangsavali assigns 1534 as the date of the death of Bisva Singha. Following the above two authorities, Gait shows the reign of Bisva Singha to be from 1509 to 1534.⁵ But it is mentioned in the Ahom Buranji that in 1537 Bisva Singha made a treaty with Suhummung, the Ahom King.⁶ We have already shown the reliability of the chronology of the

¹ Gunabhiram, A. B., pp. 56-57.

² Ibid. pp. 54-57. A. H. B. pp. 66-69.

³ Barua, H.K. A. B., pp. 23-25.

⁴ Ibid. pp. 26-28.

⁵ J. A. S. B., 1893, pp. 303-04.

⁶ A. H. B., p. 77.

Assamese Buranjis, and we are inclined to accept the latter date. Therefore, Bisva Singha must have ruled up to 1537. Nilambar, the last Kamata king, was overthrown by Husain Shah in 1498, and afterwards Chandan and Madan reigned for a period from Maralavasa, a place twenty miles north of Kamatapur. We know that the Muhammadans did not retain a permanent hold on the country, so it is not unreasonable to presume that Chandan and Madan ruled almost the whole of the country formerly under the sway of the Khen kings and in such a case it would be impossible for Bisva Singha to have begun to rule before at least 1515 A. D. We have seen that Bisva Singha gradually rose from the position of one of many petty chiefs to be ruler of the whole country from Rangpur to Kaimrup, and that he eventually found himself strong enough to march against the powerful Ahom king in Upper Assam. It is very unlikely that he could have effected all this in a shorter time than that allowed him according to the following calculation. Finally Darrangraj Vangsavali mentions twenty-five years as the duration of this reign,¹ and also states that Bisva Singha lived for a period after his Assam invasion,² which took place in 1537,³ therefore, the date of his accession and death can be taken as approximately 1515 and 1540 respectively.⁴

Nara Narayan : (1540-1586)

At the time of the death of Bisva Singha, two of his sons, Malla Deva and Sukladhvaj, were at Banaras, where they had been sent for study under an ascetic named Brahmananda.⁵ Nara Singha, one of the elder sons of the deceased king ascended to the vacant throne.⁶ News of this occurrence was sent to Malla Deva and Sukladhvaj by their nurse, when they hastened home and defeated Nara Singha in an open encounter. Nara

¹ H. A., pp. 48-49

² D. R. V., p. 51

³ Ibid. p. 57

⁴ Ibid. pp. 58-59.

⁵ D. R. V., pp. 59-60.

⁶ H. A. p. 25.

Singha then fled with his son first to Morang, thence to Nepal, and finally to Kashmir. Being unable to cross the high mountain passes surrounding Kashmir the two brothers gave up the pursuit and returned to their native country.¹

After the expulsion of Nara Singha, Malla Deb ascended his father's throne and assumed the name Nara Narayan. He made Sukladvaj the Yuvaraj (heir-apparent), under the name of Sangram Singha.² He was a good warrior and became the commander-in-chief of the Koch army. In this capacity, he displayed such skill and promptness of action that he was nicknamed Chilarai or the "Kite King," during his expeditions against the people of Assam.³

War with the Ahoms :

Soon after his accession to the throne, Nara Narayan determined to establish peace and order in the Koch kingdom. He inherited an army consisting of fifty-two lakhs, twenty-five thousand paiks from his father,⁴ and with them defeated the rebellious chiefs of the country, who during the reign of his father frequently used to have caused trouble.⁵ Next he turned his attention to the extension of his kingdom, and first of all he determined to carry out the decision formed by his father to conquer the Ahoms. The cause of the quarrel is uncertain. It is mentioned in the Assam Buranji that a petty chief or Bhuyan of the village Sujan, named Pandit Ramkha, conspired against Nara Narayan and ultimately took shelter with the Ahom king,

¹ Sir Ashley Eden, *Political Missions to Bhutan*, p. 108. H. A. p. 60.

² D. R. V. pp. 61-62.

³ Ibid. p. 66.

⁴ Ibid. p. 62. The figure 5,225,000 may be an estimate of the adult male population of the kingdom, all of whom were liable in theory to military service. The figure is obviously exaggerated, and the author of the *Vangsavali* can hardly have believed it himself. Such exaggerations are common enough in our sources, but can easily be detected. As we shall see Nara Narayan's army, in one expedition, is later seen to have contained 40,000 men.

⁵ Gunabhiram, A. B., p. 57

who then took the offensive against the Koches. Another authority states that one of the Ahom princes invaded the bordering Koch territory and killed three Koch princes, Dip Singha, Hamdhar and Ramchandra, who were posted as the leaders of the Koch troops on the frontier.¹ Whatever the cause of the war might be, in 1546 an expedition of the Koch army was sent to the Ahom country, and on the bank of the Dikrai river, a battle with the Ahom soldiers took place. The Koches succeeded in killing some of the Ahom generals, when the Ahom army retreated first to Kalibar and thence to Sala, where the battle concluded in favour of the Ahoms. This time the Ahom soldiers attacked the Koches with their elephants, and dispersed them after killing some of their leaders. Then the Koches proceeded towards the river Tilao for some time for further re-inforcements.² In the course of these operations the Koches constructed an embanked road from their capital at Cooch Behar to Narayanpur in the south-west of present North Lakhimpur subdivision, a distance of some three hundred and fifty miles. The work was carried out under the supervision of Gohain Kamal the king's brother ; portions of it are still in existence and are known to this day as "Gohain Kamal's road."³ This undertaking was completed in 1547, and the Koches then erected a fort at Narayanpur. This time Suklenmung, the Ahom king, took a very stern attitude. He was just at the rear of his enemies and posted his generals on different directions. He himself took the leadership of the fort on the river Pichala and thus, cutting off the supplies of the rivals, caused them to take the offensive. The outcome was an absolute defeat for the Koches, many of whom were slain and their arms were captured.⁴ The battle is also mentioned in the Koch Vangsavali, which however, gives no dates or details.

¹ Amanatulla, Kochbeharer Itihas. Kochbehar, 1936, p. 102. As is so common in works of this kind the author does not quote his source, which was presumably a local Vangsavali not available to us.

² A. H. B. pp. 79-81.

D. A. B. pp. 37-38.

³ Gunabhiram, A. B. p. 58.

⁴ A. H. B. p. 81.

This decisive defeat of the Koches at the hands of the Ahoms led to a cessation of hostilities between the two countries for some years. About this time it is mentioned in the Buranjis that, in 1553, Kalapahar, a general of the Bengal Nawab Sulaiman, launched an invasion on Assam. He is said to have made friends with the Koch king Nara Narayan. Instead of conquering the country, his main motive was to plunder the Hindu temples, which were said to possess enormous wealth and treasures. He had by-passed the central territory of the Koches and entered Kamrup through the Brahmaputra and plundered the Kamakhya and other Hindu places of pilgrimage of Assam by destroying the temples and monasteries.¹ According to J. N. Sarkar, he was a brother of the Afghan Sultan Sikandar Sur and during the latter's reign launched upon the career of temple-breaking, which has made his name a by-word of terror. The Buranjis agree with the Muslim sources on the date when he is said to have demolished the temples of Hajo and Kamakhya.² According to the local traditions, he was a convert from Hinduism, and, like most apostates, was a zealous persecutor of the faith which he had before professed, so that his name is remembered to this day both in Assam and Orissa as the arch destroyer of temples and images. In the middle of the sixteenth century, when Nara Narayan was deeply engaged in conquests and battles with the Ahoms and other north-eastern tribes of Assam, Kalapahar, "who was singular for his skill in river-fighting," must have launched an invasion through the Brahmaputra unresisted and destroyed the temples at Kamakhya and Hajo.³ In 1565, when, at the death of his brother Taj Khan, Sulaiman became the ruler of Bengal, which he was already governing as his brother's deputy, Kalapahar was appointed a general under him.⁴ He is said to have helped Sulaiman

¹ Gunabhiram A. B. pp. 58-59.

² H. B. Vol. II, p. 178.

³ Riyaz-us-Salatin, pp. 151-52, Ghulam-i-Husain, Salim, Cal, 1890.

⁴ H. B. Vol. II, pp. 181-182.

to build up a rich treasury by raiding Orissa and Cooch Behar, and he extended his hold over the unsubdued Bengal districts north and east of the capital at Tanda (Gaur). It was Kalapahar, who fought successfully and repulsed the first attack on Gaur by Nara Narayan in 1565, when the ever-victorious Koch prince Chilarai or Sukladvaj the yuvaraj, was made captive in the hands of the Sultan of Gaur.¹ In 1568, from the neighbourhood of Jajpur (the then capital of North Orissa), the invading Afghan army sent off a strong detachment under Kalapahar to raid the temple of Jagannath in Puri, which was famous for the wealth accumulated in it.² In 1572, at the death of Sulaiman, when his younger son Daud came to the throne of Bengal, Kalapahar continued to hold his office under him. In 1576, Khan-i-Jahan, viceroy of Akbar, attacked the Afghans near Rajmahal, when Kalapahar fought as a general of Daud Khan, who was taken prisoner and beheaded as a treaty-breaker. At that time, Kalapahar fled from the field of battle, receiving several wounds in his body.³ Finally we find Kalapahar fighting against Khan-i-Azam, the viceroy of Akbar, in 1583, during the third conquest of Bengal. The veteran renegade hero was killed in this battle.⁴ Kalapahar appears to have left no mark in the countries he invaded, beyond his fanatic acts of sacrilege and iconoclasm. Though he is referred to in the Buranjis, nothing is mentioned of Kalapahar in the Koch Vangsavali, except incidentally in the statement that Nara Narayan rebuilt Kamakhya which the wicked Mussalmans had destroyed.⁵

Sucharuchand : (1555-)

One of the Assam Buranjis mentions that in 1555, Nara Narayan drove away Sucharuchand from his small principality on the border of the Koch kingdom, which he succeeded to from his father Durlabh, who founded it by the help of the Ahom

¹ H. B. Vol. II, p. 183.

² Ibid. pp. 194-195.

³ Ibid. p. 202.

⁴ H. B. Vol. II, p. 202.

⁵ D. R. V., p. 105.

king, after Durlabh's father had been dethroned by Husain Shah in 1498.¹ In this connection Amanatulla says that at this time (1555) one of the petty chiefs or Bhuyans in the Koch kingdom rebelled against Nara Narayan and took shelter with the Ahom king Suklenmung, who then attacked the Koch king.² But we have already shown³ that this occurrence took place before 1546, when Nara Narayan first attacked the Ahom country and at that time the Ahom king was Suklenmung who ruled from 1539-1552. In 1555, Sukhampha was the Ahom king, whose reign begins from 1552, at the death of Suklenmung. Hence Amanatulla does not record these events in their true historical sequence. It is said that during the year 1555 and 1556, there were exchange of letters and embassies between Nara Narayan and Sukhampha for a mutual compromise, but all these moves were without definite diplomatic outcome.⁴

It is mentioned in the Vangsavali that Nara Narayan conquered Cachar, Manipur, Jayantia, Tippera, Sylhet, Khairam and Dimarua, but nowhere can we find the dates when the conquests in question actually took place. Gait refers to these conquests as occurring just after the final defeat of the Ahoms in 1563.⁵ But he does not appear to be correct.

It is mentioned in the Ahom Buranji that the Ahoms were finally defeated by the Koches in 1563. We know that the temple of Kamakhya was rebuilt by Nara Narayan in 1565, and it is mentioned in the Vangsavali that Kamakhya was rebuilt after the first invasion of Gaur by Nara Narayan, when Chilarai became a prisoner. In this connection, Gait himself recognizes that all the Koch conquests must have taken considerable time, stressing "the difficulties of locomotion at that

¹ Rudra Singhar Buranji, p. 38.

² Kochbeharer Itihas, Amanatulla, Kochbehar, 1936, p. 103.

³ See p. 194-95

⁴ Amanatulla, Kochbeharer Itihas, Kochbehar, 1936, pp. 104-05.

⁵ H. A. p. 52.

time, and the fact that between each war it would probably be necessary for the Raja to spend sometime attending to the internal affairs of his kingdom and consolidating his rule." Yet between Nara Narayan's conquest of Upper Assam in 1563 and the defeat of his expedition against Gaur only two years elapsed. The sequence of events after the latter campaign is clearly stated in our sources, and will be discussed in detail below ; here it is sufficient to say that after Nara Narayan's first campaign against Gaur there was no time for the conquests of the states of the Assam hills. It seems much more probable that they were already conquered when Nara Narayan defeated the Ahoms in 1563. Therefore, it can be safely said that the above conquests of Nara Narayan took place between 1547 and 1562. It is reasonable to think that only after conquering the neighbouring petty chiefs and rulers did the Koches try their power with the mighty Ahoms of the north-east, and only after conquering the whole of north-eastern India, would they have decided to attack the more powerful Muhammadan ruler of Gaur.

Conquest of Kachari Kingdom :

After his first unsuccessful campaign against the Ahom Raja, Nara Narayan decided to conquer the Hedamba or the kingdom of the Kacharis. The Vangsavali says that this time the Koch army was led by redoubtable Chilarai, who easily overcame the Kachari king at his capital. After submission Hedambesvar gave eighty-four elephants and other presents, and the Koches left his kingdom on condition that he would pay an annual tribute of 70,000 silver rupees, 1,000 gold mohars, and sixty elephants.²

Submission of the Manipur king :

Nara Narayan then sent messengers to the king of Manipur, asking him to submit and pay tribute, and the Raja, feeling

himself too weak to resist such a powerful monarch, at once carried out his order. His tribute was fixed yearly at 20,000 rupees, 300 gold coins, and ten good elephants. The king is said to have paid the first instalment with 20,000 rupees, 1,000 gold coins, and forty elephants.¹

Victories over Jayantia and Tippera kings :

The next expedition was sent against the king of Jayantia, who was killed by Chilarai in open battle. Then, at the requests of the subjects of the Jayantia Kingdom, Nara Narayan set up the deceased Raja's son on the throne after making him promise to pay an annual tribute consisting of seventy horses, ten thousand silver coins, and three hundred sharp swords ; in the first instance he had to present one hundred horses, ten thousand rupees, one thousand gold coins, and one hundred swords. It is said that one of the conditions imposed on him was that he should not in future strike coins in his own name.² In confirmation of the above statement Gait observed "that until the year 1731, no king of Jayantia appears to have recorded his name on the coins minted by him ; on all known coins of an earlier date, as on most of the later ones also, the words 'ruler of Jayantia' are used instead of the Raja's name."³

Then another expedition of the Koch soldiers was sent, under the leadership of Chilarai, against the Raja of Tippera. It is said that this time the Koch army consisted of 40,000 men, and that in the battle which took place no fewer than 18,000 men of the Tippera army were slain. The king is said to have been killed by Chilarai himself. Nara Narayan ordered to place the deceased king's brother on the vacant throne, and fixed an annual tribute of 9,000 gold coins, a first tribute having been paid of 10,000 silver coins, 100 gold coins and 30 war-horses.⁴ It is stated in the history of Cachar that during the time of the con-

¹ Ibid. pp. 79-81.

² D. R. V., pp. 81-82.

³ H. A., p. 53.

⁴ D. R. V., pp. 82-83. It is surprising that so heavy a tribute of gold should have been levied, when such a small quantity was paid in the first instance. Can it be that the Vangsavali has 'gold' in error for 'silver' ?

quest of Tippera by Nara Narayan the northern part of Chittagong was under the jurisdiction of Tippera Raj. Nara Narayan having conquered Tippera, is said to have stationed a group of soldiers there, constructing a fort near Brahmapur, which was then named Kochpur and is now called Khaspur.¹

Submission of the chiefs of Khairam and Dimarua :

Gunilanta, (or Viryyavanta), the Raja of Khairam, knowing the prowess and ambitions of Nara Narayan, is said to have voluntarily made his submission to avoid the fate which had overtaken the kings of Jayantia and Tippera. He presented for the first time to Nara Narayan sixty horses, forty strong tuskers, forty thousand rupees, and one thousand gold coins, and prayed to be allowed to mint coins in his own name, which request it is said was not granted. His tribute was fixed at fifteen thousand rupees, nine hundred gold coins, fifty horses and thirty elephants. The Vangsavali says that this king at last was granted the favour of minting coins not in his own name but in that of Nara Narayan.²

The next victory of Nara Narayan was over Panthesvar Raja, of Dimarua, who was a descendant of king Mriganka, a later Kamata king. After a considerable battle with the Koch army the Dimarua chief is said to have become a prisoner in the hands of Chilarai. He was subsequently released on condition of paying an annual tribute of seven thousand rupees.³

Change of the course of the Brahmaputra :

In the course of these expeditions, Nara Narayan is said to have employed his troops to straighten the course of the Brahmaputra opposite Pandunatha, a place near the foot of the

¹ Amanatulla, Kochbeharer Itihas, p. 112.

² D. R. V., pp. 84-86.

³ D. R. V., pp. 86-89.

Nilachal hill, some four miles west of Gauhati. The new course of the Brahmaputra was named after this event as Khargasrota¹ (sword stream) because it was made as straight as a sword.

Conquest of Sylhet :

After stopping for some time at a village called Raha, Nara Narayan determined to attack the Padshah of Sirat (Sylhet), whose kingdom is described as being near Jayantia, and who is said to have been very powerful. Messengers were sent asking him to submit, but on his refusal to do so, Chilarai proceeded with a strong force to overcome him. He met the army of the Sylhet king, and a battle took place which lasted for three days. At the end of the third day, as the balance of victory still hung in favour of the Koches, Chilarai became impatient and so he rushed forward to attack the hostile army. It is said that 100,000 soldiers fell before his all-destroying sword, and at last the king of Sylhet himself was slain with a blow of Chilarai's sword. The Padshah's brother, Asirai then tendered his submission and returned with Chilarai to the court of Nara Narayan with a present of one hundred elephants, nine hundred horses, 300,000 rupees and 10,000 gold coins. Nara Narayan at last out of pity appointed him Padshah in place of his deceased brother and fixed his annual tribute at 300,000 rupees, 10,000 gold coins, 100 elephants and 200 good horses.²

After conquering the kingdoms that intervened between the Ahoms and the Koches in 1562, Nara Narayan, the king of the latter, decided to try his power with the Ahoms. Gait gives as the reason for this fresh rivalry the fact that the Koches were accused of raiding some Ahom villages in the course of their operation³ against the Kacharis, but he never mentions his source. Here he does not appear to be correct. Both the

¹ D. R. V., p. 87.

² Ibid. pp. 90-96.

³ H. A. p. 100.

parties had long been mutually hostile and the Koches under Nara Narayan at that time were maintaining an era of "Digvijaya." From the point of view of the sources available to us, the Koches wantonly attacked the Ahoms, and we have no reference to unintentional transgression of the frontier. A force under the leadership of Tepu and Bhaktamal crossed the Ahom frontier and ascended through the Brahmaputra up to Sala. Next they encamped at Dikhaumukh. In a naval engagement on the Handia river, the Ahoms appear to have been worsted. Four of their generals along with a large number of infantry were killed in the battle and many of them became prisoners into the hands of the Koches. In spite of this the Ahoms did not stop fighting.¹

In January, 1563, Chilarai himself arrived with reinforcements. After a decisive battle the Ahoms were completely defeated. First the Koches occupied Majuli and thence Garhgaon, the capital, and hoisted their flag upon the Ahom palace. The Ahom king along with his nobles and family members took shelter in the Naga hills. After a few months the Ahom capital was evacuated by the Koches on condition of the acknowledgement of the Koch suzerainty, the cession of a considerable tract of the Ahom territory on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, the delivery of a number of sons of the nobles as hostages, and the payment of a war indemnity of 60 elephants, 60 pieces of cloth, and a large quantity of gold and silver. A garrison of the Koch army was stationed at Narayanpur to hold the Ahom territory.²

War with Padshah of Gaur :

Being thus victorious in north, east and south, Nara Narayan determined to invade the kingdom of Gaur in the west, in order to avenge the misdeeds of Kalapahar who invaded Assam in 1553 and destroyed the Hindu temples. Muslim sources show that Nara Narayan invaded Gaur in 1567.³ It is mentioned in the Vangsavali that before this invasion Nara Narayan visited

¹ A. H. B. pp. 84-85.

² A. H. B. p. 85-87 and D. A. B., pp. 41-42.

³ Riyazu-s-Salatin, Ghulam-i-Husain, Salim, Calcutta, 1890, p. 152.

the temple of Kamakhya which he found in ruins. He intended to rebuild it, but ultimately he postponed this pious act until 1565. So, according to Vangsavali, his proposed expedition was completed, before 1565. This time the Koch army under the leadership of Chilarai was defeated by the Padshah of Gaur, after a fight which lasted for ten days. Chilarai himself performed prodigies of valour, and after his weapons had been broken he disdained to fly, and so continued to fight until he became a prisoner in the hands of the Padshah.¹ After some years of captivity the Koch prince Sukladhvaj was set free, evidently when the Pathan Wazir Mian Ludi decided to secure a strong friend on his northern frontier in view of the inevitable contest with the Mughals who were coming nearer and nearer.² As a result the Karatoya was fixed as the boundary between the two kingdoms, and thus, in the parganas, Baharband, Bhitarband, Gayabari, Serpur and Das Kaunia and North Mymensingh, which were under the Muhammadans' rule, were annexed to the Koch kingdom.³

In 1564, in order to cultivate good relations henceforward, Nara Narayan released all the Ahom hostages along with Sondar Gohain, who were brought to the Koch capital in 1563, after the defeat of the Ahoms.⁴ In 1565, Nara Narayan rebuilt the Kamakhya temple with bricks. He made a grant of land for the maintenance of the shrine, and gave away alms to the extent of two thousand five hundreds rupees. He also caused two statues of himself and Chilarai respectively to be made and placed within the temple, where they are still in existence. At this time he caused roads, monasteries and tanks to be constructed, and trees to be planted. Under his auspices Sastras were published and the Ratnamala was composed, and even the common people were made to study religious books.

¹ D. R. V. pp. 98-99.

² The Vamsavali gives a romantic story, pp. 101-04.

³ H. B. Vol. II, p. 178.

⁴ A. H. B., p. 88.

Saktism was the state religion, but Vaisnavism was more than tolerated, and great honour was paid to Sankaradev, the great Vaisnava reformer, Deva Damodara, and other Vaisnava divines. The country enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity, and trade and commerce thrived exceedingly.¹

It is said in the Vangsavali that a few years later Nara Narayan combined with Akbar to attack the Padshah of Gaur. Chilarai invaded his kingdom from the east, while Raja Man Singh, who was in command of the imperial army, advanced upon him from the west. The ruler of Gaur, being thus attacked from two sides at the same time, was easily defeated, and his kingdom was then divided between the Koch king and the Emperor of Delhi.² According to the Akbarnamah, this occurrence took place in 1574, after the conquest of Patna by Akbar himself. It is mentioned there that Munim Khan was sent from Patna at the head of 20,000 men to conquer Bengal. The Delhi cavalry guided by the local zemindars made a detour through the Rajmahal hills and turned the Garhi pass on its southern side, while another force made a demonstration in front of it. The Afghan soldiers in the capital fled without a fight and Munim Khan entered Tanda (Gaur), the capital of Bengal, without resistance.³ Evidently the zemindars mentioned above cannot be other than the Koches, because we know at that time the Karatoya was the border between the kingdoms of Daud Khan and Nara Narayan. The Koches and the Muhammadans were the paramount authority of their respective regions. We have no evidence of other local chiefs in Bengal or petty zemindars in the Koch region to help the imperial army. In 1576, Khan-i-Jahan, the viceroy of Akbar, defeated the Afghans near Rajmahal, and Daud was taken a prisoner and beheaded.⁴ It is mentioned in the Ain-i-Akbari that at this time Nara Narayan renewed his demonstration of obedience to the imperial throne and sent fifty-four elephants and other valuable presents to Akbar.⁵

¹ Acharyya, N. N., Kamrup and Her Glorious Days, Assam Tribune, May, 18, 1958.

² Ibid. pp. 110-113.

³ Akbarnamah III, p. 150-53. H. B. Vol. II, p. 186.

⁴ Ibid. pp. 260-66, & Ibid. p. 194.

⁵ H. B. Vol. II, p. 194. H. A. p. 55.

In the course of the second expedition of Gaur, in 1571, Chilarai was attacked with small pox and died on the banks of the Ganges. He had a son named Raghudeb, who was given into the care of Nara Narayan. After Chilarai's death, a long period of peace ensued, during which the people enjoyed great prosperity, while Narayan gave such encouragement to religion that he became known as "the pious King".¹ According to one of the Ahom Buranjis, available to Gait, which we have not been able to trace, it is stated that a rebellion occurred in 1577, headed by three men named Bar Dado, Gabha Naik and Bar Katu. Being chased by Nara Narayan, they fled with 14,000 of their followers to the Ahom country and settled at Gajala.²

Raghu Deb : (1581-1603)

The Akbarnama states that Mal Gohain (i. e. Malladev or Nara Narayan) was childless, and had nominated his nephew Raghu Deb, son of Shukla Gohain, (i. e. Sukladhvaj or Chila Rai) as heir-apparent ; he was, however, persuaded to marry (presumably implying to marry again) by his brother when well advanced in middle age. As a result of this late marriage he produced a son, Lakshmi Narayan, who became heir-apparent.³ This led to the disaffection of Raghudeb, which was fanned by some of his father's old followers ; and at last under the pretence of making a journey, Raghu collected his family and adherents and proceeded to Barnagar on the Manas river, where he built a town called Ghilajaipur. Nara Narayan sent men to recall him, and on his refusal, instead of making war with his kinsmen, the peace-loving king agreed to divide the kingdom, keeping the portion west of the river Sankosh for himself and his successors and giving up to Raghudev the tract east of that river. Raghudev thus ruled the country now included in the Mangaldai subdivision and the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara ; his dominion stretched southwards from the Goal-

¹ D. R. V. pp. 113-119. .

² H. A., p. 55.

³ Amanatulla, Kochbeharer Itihas, p. 135.

para boundary, and included the country between the old course of the Brahmaputra and the Garo Hills, which now forms the eastern part of Mymensingh. In 1581 Raghu made his capital at Barnagar.¹ He visited five places of pilgrimage, Ganesa, Kedara, Gokarna, Garua and Kamesvara, and rebuilt the Manikuta temple (of the God Hayagriva) at Hajo on the Mani Hill. An inscription on the temple, dated 1583, mentions Raghudev as the king under whose orders it was rebuilt. He is said to have been devoted to religion and to have made liberal gifts to brahmins.² In 1584, he made a matrimonial alliance with the powerful Ahom king Sukhampha, no doubt in order to strengthen his still rather precarious position.

Raghudev's war with Isa Khan :

Raghu soon came into conflict with an Afghan named Isa Khan, the Bhuyan of Khijirpur, near Narayangunj in Dacca. He was already a powerful chief in the time of the Bengal Padshah Daud Khan. When, in 1576, the latter was overthrown by Khan Jahan, Isa Khan became the leader of the Afghans throughout the eastern part of Bengal, and at one time he ruled the whole country from Ghoraghat to the sea. He was defeated by Shahbaz Khan in 1583 and fled by ship to Chittagong. He there collected a body of troops, and, with their aid he proceeded to carve out for himself a new kingdom. Encouraged no doubt by the death of Chilarai and the family strife and dissensions of the Koches, he selected for his first operations the southern outlying portion of the tract assigned by Nara Narayan to his rebellious nephew. Raghu endeavoured to resist the invaders in person, and occupied a fort near the village of Jangalbari in the district of Mymensingh. It was surrounded by a moat, but the defenders were not able to hold it against the vigorous onslaught of Isa Khan and his men. Raghu himself escaped by a tunnel while the assault was in progress. Following up his victory Isa Khan took from the Koches the whole country as far as Rangumati in the Goalpura district.³

¹ Gunabhiram, A. B. pp. 62-63.

² Darrangraj Vangsavali, p. 128-30.

³ Wise, On the Baro Bhuyans of Eastern Bengal (J. A. S. B. 1874, p. 213). Blinckmann's translation of the Ain-i-Akbari, p. 343. H. C. p. 62.

In 1586, at the death of Nara Narayan, his son Lakshmi Narayan succeeded to the throne of the western Koch kingdom, which included the present districts of Cooch Behar, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, and Rangpur.¹ Henceforward, the western Koch kingdom became a separate state with its capital at the present Cooch Behar, and had no bearing on the history of Assam ; we shall occasionally refer to it in connection with the eastern Koch kingdom of Assam.

On the death of Nara Narayan, Raghudev declared himself independent and struck coins in his own name. He then refused to acknowledge the supremacy of Lakshmi Narayan. Next Raghu, in 1596, making alliance with Isa Khan, the powerful zemindar of East Bengal, attacked the bordering territory of Lakshmi Narayan, who then begged the protection of the Mughals. Man Singh, then the viceroy of Bengal, hastened to his aid from Salimnagar to Govindapur, where Lakshmi Narayan came and welcomed him and gave his sister Prabhavati in marriage. Raghu and Isa Khan took flight on hearing of Man Singh's prompt advance. Thus the western Koch kingdom became a vassal state of the Mughal Empire. In 1597, Raghu having collected a force, again seized some portions of Lakshmi Narayan's territory, when Man Singh sent a detachment and defeated Raghu. Next Raghu called Isa Khan again to his side to fight the imperial forces. Man Singh sent a force under his son Durjan Singh, to attack Katrabhu, in Isa Khan's territory. The combined army of Isa Khan and Raghu surrounded the Mughal detachment in overwhelming force, slew Durjan Singh and many of his troops and took some prisoners. Later on, a peace was concluded between the imperial power on one side and Isa Khan and Raghu on the other, in which the latter gave up his attack on Lakshmi Narayan.²

It is mentioned in the Vangsavali that Raghu ruled for thirty-two years and on his death was succeeded by his son Parikshit.³

¹ Gunabhiram, A. B. p. 64.

² H. B. Vol. II. p. 212.

³ D. R. V., p. 132.

Gunabhiram says that the accession of Raghu Dev took place in 1581. Coins of Raghu exist which are dated 1588.¹ But the inscription inside the temple at Hajo solves the problem. It is mentioned in the inscription that "the king Raghu coming of age had a temple built on the hillock called Mani Hillock in S. E. 1505 (A. D. 1583)."² So in the absence of any contrary evidence, the date shown by Gunabhiram can be accepted as true. But the issue is different as to the date of his death and the accession of Parikshit. It is mentioned in the Vangsavali that Raghu ruled for thirty-two years.³ Gunabhiram says that his death took place in 1593, which date was at first accepted by Sir Edward Gait.⁴ The Padishanamah states that Parikshit was ruling when Jahangir came to the throne in 1605. So Raghu must have died before that date. It is mentioned in the Assam Buranji that Raghu gave his daughter named Mangaldai in marriage to the Ahom king Sukhampha, who ruled from 1552 to 1603.⁵ Therefore, Raghu must have died in or before 1603. It is mentioned in the Vangsavali that Parikshit minted coins on his accession.⁶ A coin of Parikshit has been found, dated 1603.⁷ Therefore, 1603, can be taken as the date for the death of Raghu Dev and the accession of Parikshit. It is said that in 1571, at the time of the second expedition of the Koches against Gaur, Chilarai died on the bank of the Ganges, having been attacked by smallpox.⁸ Therefore, it may be that the author of the Vangsavali counted the regnal years of Raghu from the date of his father's death, rather than from the date of his accession, which took place about ten years later.

¹ H. A. p. 63.

² J. A. S. B. 1893, p. 296.

³ D. R. V. p. 132.

⁴ Ibid., p. 304.

⁵ Barua H. K., A. B., p. 37.

⁶ D. R. V. p. 138.

⁷ H. A., p. 60.

⁸ Amanatulla, Kochbeharer Itihas, p. 119.

The Rajas of Bijni, Beltola and Darrang claim their descent from the family of Raghu Deb. A list of the subsequent eastern Koch rulers :

Parikshit Narayan 1603-1613

Balinarayan alias Dharma Narayan (in Darrang)
1615-1637.

Mahendra Narayan 1637-1643. (Darrang)

Chandra Narayan alias Bijit Narayan (in Bijni)
1643-1660.

Suryya Narayan 1660-1682.

Indra Narayan 1682-1725.

Aditya Narayan

Dhvaj Narayan alias Gaja Narayan (in Beltola)

Madhu Narayan

Dhir Narayan

Mahat Narayan

Durlabh Narayan

Hangsa Narayan

Kirti Narayan⁴

CHAPTER IX

THE KACHARIS

The Kacharis are the earliest known indigenous inhabitants of Assam. They are known under different names in different places and ages throughout the north-eastern corner of the Indian sub-continent. In Goalpara and north Bengal, they are called Mech and in north Cachar Hills, Dimasa. In the Brahmaputra Valley, the Kacharis call themselves Bodo or Bodo-fisa (sons of the Bodo). They were known to the Ahoms as Timisa, clearly a corruption of Dimasa, and, therefore, this name must have applied to them when they were ruling the Dhansiri valley.¹

Apart from the outlying members of the race, there are within the limits of Assam itself at least 1,000,000 souls, probably many more, who belong to the Kachari race. In addition to the Kacharis proper, Dr. Endle has classed the following tribes of Assam within the fold of the great Bodo race,—Rabha, Mech, Dhimal, Koch, Solanimiyas, Nahaliyas, Phulgurias, Saraniyas, Dimasa, Hojais, Lalungs, Garos and Hajongs. “To these,” says Mr. Endle, “may be added one or two smaller communities e. g. the Morans and the Chutias in Upper Assam, whose language, not altogether extinct as yet though apparently dying out rapidly, would seem to prove them to be closely akin to the Kachari (Bodo) race.”²

¹ Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, p. 241.

² S. Endle, *The Kacharis*, pp. 4-5.

As with other races and tribes of ancient and medieval India, the origin of the Kacharis is difficult to trace. From their physical features and general appearance, they seem to be of Mongolian type ; and this would point to their original home being somewhere in Tibet or China. According to Garo tradition, their forefathers, the offspring of Hindu and Tibetan blood, came down from the northern mountains, and after a halt at Cooch-Bihar, made their way to Jogighopa, and thence across the Brahmaputra to Dalgoma, and so finally into the Garo Hills.¹

Captain Fisher, the first Superintendent of Cachar, was of the opinion that the Kacharis gradually acquired an empire over Assam, Sylhet, Mymensingh, and the valleys to the east of the Brahmaputra, their original seat being at Kamarupa ; and that their rule ultimately embraced everything from Kamarupa down to the sea. They built brick cities and it is supposed that the Tipparah Raja was a younger son of the house, the original empire being divided into a northern and southern part.² Sir Edward Gait was of the opinion that the Kacharis are very closely allied to the Koches and also, so far as the language is concerned, to the Chutias, Lalungs, and Morans of the Brahmaputra Valley, and to the Garos and the Tipperas of the southern hills. Having regard to their wide distribution, and to the extent of country over which Bodo languages of a very uniform type are still current, it seems not improbable that at one time the major part of Assam and north-east Bengal formed a great Bodo kingdom, and that some, at least, of the Mlechchha kings mentioned in the old copper-plate inscriptions belonged to the Kachari or some closely allied tribe.³ Mr. C. A. Soppitt says that the Kachari race originally inhabited the hills and slopes to the north of the Brahmaputra, and then gradually extended through central Assam to the Mymensingh district, the head-quarters of the Raja being established at Gauhati.

¹ Ibid. pp. 3-4.

² Captain Fisher, *Memoir of Sylhet Kachar and the adjacent Districts*, J. A. S. B. IX. Part II, 1840, pp. 829-30.

³ E. Gait, *A History of Assam*, p. 248.

Mr. J. F. Webster says that the eldest son of the second king of Tippera is said to have married the Kachari Raja's daughter and succeeded to the throne of Cachar. There was a time when the kingdom of the Tipperas was contiguous to Hirimba or Cachar.¹ Rev. S. Endle says that the Kachari race were the original autochthones of Assam, and form a large, perhaps the main constituent element in the permanent population of the province.² He is of the opinion that there were two great immigrations from the north and north east into the rich valley of the Brahmaputra—one entering north-east Bengal and Western Assam through the valley of the Tista, Dharla, Sankosh and founding there what was formerly the powerful kingdom of Kamarupa ; and the other making its way through the Subansiri, Dibong and Dihong valleys into Eastern Assam, where a branch of the widespread Kachari race, known as Chutias, undoubtedly held sway for a long period.³ As we have seen we believe that the Kacharis or a branch of them, the Chutias, invaded Assam by way of the Subansiri.⁴ According to the Limbu legend of creation, it is said that one of the two progenitors of the human race settled in the Khachar country, which is the name given by the Nepalese to the tract at the foot of the hills between the Brahmaputra and the Kosi rivers, and at this region, in course of time, the Koch, Mech and Dhimal tribes came into existence.⁵ The word 'Khachar' is said by Gait to be derived from a Sanskrit word meaning a 'bordering region,' but we are unable to find any such word in Standard Sanskrit Dictionaries. In Bengali 'Kachar' means the 'deep bank of a river.' If Cachar was an early home of the Mech, or the headquarters of a powerful Mech dynasty, the members of the tribe in Assam may have been called Kacharis. The district of Cachar may have got its name directly from this word, or it may have been so called after its principal tribe. In any case it is evident that the Kacharis did not get

¹ J. F. Webster, *Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers, Tippera*, pp. 11-12.

² S. Endle, *The Kacharis*, London, 1911, pp. 7-8.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ See Chapter on the Chutias

⁵ Risley, *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1892. H. A., p. 247.

their name from the present district of Cachar. They are known by that name in many parts far removed from the district of that name, and were so called long before a section of the tribe took possession of that district.¹ About their first home in Assam, the Kacharis themselves believe that they lived originally in a land called Kamruli (Kamrup) by which flowed a river in a great valley ; then they were driven out and got to a place called Kundilo (Kundil or Sadiya).²

According to B. C. Allen, the Kacharis are a section of the Indo-Chinese race, whose original habitat was somewhere between the upper waters of the Yang-tse-kiang and the Hoang-ho, and who gradually spread in successive waves of immigration over the greater part of what is now the province of Assam, entering by way of Burma.³ This theory is to be recommended on the grounds that, apart from the southward movement of the Miris and Chutias, most of the tribal migrations have been from the south towards the north. This was the direction of the Ahom invasion in the thirteenth century, the traditions of the Nagas all represent them as coming from the South, and the northward movement of the Kuki tribes was only stopped by the intervention of the British Government. On the other hand Mr. Dundas, a former officer of north Cachar, reports that an old prayer was, fifty years ago, still in use amongst the Dimasa which refers to a huge peepul tree growing near the confluence of the Dilao (Brahmaputra) and the Sagi. There the Kacharis were born and increased greatly in numbers, and thence they travelled till they reached Nilachal, the hill near Gauhati on which the temple of Kamakhya stands. From Nilachal they migrated to Halali, and finally settled in Dimapur.⁴

¹ H. A. pp. 247-48.

² A. C. R. 1931, pt. I., J. H. Grace, Note on the Hill Kacharis, App. B., p. VIII., Kachari Buranji, Introduction xiii.

³ A. D. G., Sibsagar, p. 17.

⁴ Allen, B. C., A. D. G., Nowgong, pp. 21-22.

The copper plates of the eleventh century record that the dynasty of Naraka had been displaced by Salastambha, a Mleccha or foreign conqueror, whose line ended in the person of Sri Harsa, and was succeeded by another family of foreign princes, the first of whom was Pralambha and the last Tyaga Singha. The dynasty of Naraka was then restored in the person of Brahmapala.¹ We know the dates of the succession of Salastambha and Pralambha as being 664 and 800 A. D.² If the assumption of power by the Mlecchas corresponds with the great irruptions of the Bodos, then the Kacharis were in a very powerful position from the latter part of the seventh century A. D. Dr. B. C. Allen says that the Nowgong copper plate belongs to the latter end of the tenth century A. D.³ If the Mleccha chief, who overthrew the line of Naraka, was a Kachari king, then it may not be unlikely that when driven from Gauhati by Brahmapala in 1,000 A. D.,⁴ the Kacharis had retreated to the valley of the Dhansiri and established their capital at Dimapur. It is also said that Jangal Balahu, son of the famous Arimatta, whose capital was at Sahari Mauza, about two miles west of Raha, was engaged in constant feuds with the Kacharis, by whom he was finally defeated and killed. The remains of considerable earthworks, which are said to have surrounded the capital of Jangal Balahu, are to be seen even at the present day near Raha, a railway station in the District of Nowgong. Several places such as Raha, Jagi and Kajalimukh, situated on the Kalang river, are said to derive their names from incidents in his flight when pursued by the Kacharis.⁵ According to Mr. Fisher, the Kacharis of North Cachar believe that they once ruled in Kamarupa, and their royal family traced its descent from Rajas of that country, of the line of Ha-tung-tsa.⁶

¹ History of Assam, Gait, p. 30.

² J. A. S. B. Vol LXII, pp. 113, 285.

³ B. C. Allen, A. D. G., Nowgong, Pp. 21-22.

⁴ B. C. Allen, A. D. G., p. 20.

⁵ Ibid. pp. 20-21.

⁶ Gait, A History of Assam, p. 248.

But whatever that might be, the Kachari or Bodo race, it is evident, is a very widely distributed one and exercised their sovereignty throughout Assam in different ages, with different names and in different places. They are undoubtedly found well outside the limits of the modern Assam, i.e. in the districts of North-East Bengal—Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Rangpur, Mymensingh and also in Hill Tipperah, where the language of the people gives decisive evidence that they are of the Bodo stock. Dr. S. K. Bhuyan is of the opinion that a strain of Kachari blood may be traced in classes which have passed off as pure "Aryan." According to him, "the Kingdom of Cachar, of which Tamradhwaj Narayan was the ruler in the reign of Svargadeo Rudra Singha, and Govinda Chandra at the time of British occupation, is only one of the numerous states brought to existence by the political genius of the Kachari people. But, because the name 'Cachar' was attached to the specific kingdom of that name, after which the district is called at the present time, the superficial observer is led to suppose that the habitat of the Kacharis is Cachar, and that it is only in Cachar that the Kacharis experimented in the arduous task of state-building; whereas in fact the Kacharis are scattered all over the Brahmaputra valley in addition to the so called district of Cachar, and even beyond their limits.'

Although previous to the establishment of the Kachari Raj at Dimapur on the river Subansiri, a portion of their history is, to a certain extent, wrapped in oblivion, it is very certain that the race was ruling for many years throughout Assam. This fact is established not only by the large number of the people now found, but by the traces of their domination having been left in the nomenclature of some of the physical features of the country, especially in the names of all, or nearly all, the principal rivers; thus, Dibru signifies in Kachari, the river of rapids (di-water bru-bubbling, broken); Disai means the small river, and the word di, a Kachari synonym for water, is traceable in the names of numberless other rivers and streams throughout the

Assam valley, such as Dihing, Dijoi, Disang, Diputa, Dikrang, Diyu, Dihong, Dibong, Dimu, Diku, Diphu and Digaru etc. Dimapur signifies "the town on the big or head water," i. e. river town and was doubtless so named by the Kacharis on the Raj being established.¹

At the time of Kachari migration from Gauhati to Upper Assam, a large number of Kacharis were being absorbed in the ruling race in Central Assam by inter-marriage, while others retired to the surrounding hills. The latter gradually changed their customs and language either from contact with the other inhabitants or from their intercourse with the Koch race before leaving the plains, and developed into a separate and distinct tribe called Garos. The similarity in the construction of many words in Garo would lead to the supposition that the two languages were nearly allied at some remote period. During this migration, however, in addition to the large numbers of the race left in Central Assam, further bodies were left in Tezpur (Darrang), Nowgong, and other places through which the exodus took place. Some of these people still speak the language known as Kachari, though in slightly different form from the pure dialect in use in the North Cachar Hills, and are known as Lalung, Mech and Hajong. The large number of Kacharis who were transformed into the ruling race in the Assam valley tendered their submission to the Koch, during their sway in Western Assam and subsequently to the Ahoms; and though many, by combining and forming large communities, retained their language to a great extent in its original form (Bodo), many again lost all, or nearly all, trace of their nationality from contact with the ruling races, and have probably contributed largely to the Koch caste of Hindus throughout the valley of the Brahmaputra. After the removal of the Kachari Raj from Dimapur to Maibong, we hear of fights between the Kacharis in Nowgong and Darrang and the Ahoms. As regards Darrang, it is known that considerable bodies of Kacharis settled in the district, their descendants being there to this day, and it is pro-

C. A. Soppitt, *A Historical and Descriptive Account of the Kachari, tribe* Shillong, 1885, p-3.

bable that before re-submitting to the Ahoms, after the departure of the Koch, several engagements took place. They were defeated, however, and shortly after helped the Ahoms against the Muhammadans.¹

The Kachari Buranji gives two accounts of the early Kacharis—the first one of the Kacharis of Sadiya, which evidently is the history of the Chutia tribes, and the second one is of the Hedamba Kacharis, which can be discussed with profit in our present chapter.

Early Kachari Kings :

King Sasempha, a successor of the epic hero Bhim, was the ruler of Hedamba country. In course of time, one of his descendants, Birhas by name, became very powerful among the Kacharis. He was succeeded by his son-in-law Bicharpatipha by name. He added many provinces to his principalities by a series of conquests.² After this king, his son Bikramadityapha became the king of the Kacharis. He is said to have annexed to his kingdom the adjacent territory Namsang and Barhat. He ruled for a long period and is said to have founded a city named Sonapur by erecting golden statues and temples. The city Sonapur is still in existence. He is said to have built another city named Banpur, also still in existence, by erecting golden statue of the God Banesvar (i. e. Siva) and temples. He dug many ponds there. At last he made Mahamanipha, the king of that place and left to found a new capital. He fought with the Nagas and the Morans, and occupied their territory. There he founded a new capital named Lakshmindrapur and passed the last days of his life.³

¹ C. A. Soppitt, *A Historical and Descriptive Account of the Kachari Tribe*. Shillong, 1885, p-2.

² Dr. Peter Wade, *An Account of Assam*, ed B. Sarma, Sibsagar, 1927. p. 61.

³ Kachari Buranji, pp. 3-10.

At the death of Vikramadityapha, Mahamanipha ascended to the Kachari throne. After some time, he made Manipha, his successor, the King of the Kachari kingdom and went to Patahadambak and founded a new capital there. Manipha was succeeded by Ladpha after whom Khorapha became the Kachari king. During the rule of the last three rulers, the centre of Kachari government had shifted between Lakshmin-drapur and Patahadambak. It is mentioned in the Kachari Buranji that Khorapha or Khunkara was the Kachari king at the end of the fifteenth and in the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹

According to Sir Edward Gait, the Kachari kingdom in the thirteenth century extended along the south bank of the Brahmaputra, from the Dikhu to the Kalang, or beyond, and included also the valley of the Dhansiri and the tract which now forms the north Cachar subdivision. At that time, the country further west, though largely inhabited by the Kacharis, appears to have formed part of the Hindu kingdom of Kamata. Towards the end of this century, the outlying Kachari settlements east of the Dikhu river withdrew before the Ahoms. For the whole fourteenth century, the Dikhu river appears to have formed the boundary between the Kacharis and the Ahoms.²

Struggle with the Ahoms :

Sources available to J. P. Wade, which we have not been able to trace, state that Supimpha (1493-97), the Ahom King, defeated the Kacharis and seized a part of their country and erected fortifications at Namsang.³ The next encounter between the Kacharis and the Ahoms took place in Dec. 1526, when the Ahom king Suhummung marched against the Kacharis, and ascended the Dhansiri to Barduar. In this battle, although the

¹ Kachari Buranji. p. 11.

² Gait, H. A. pp. 248-249.

³ Dr. J. P. Wade, An Account of Assam, Ed B. Sarma, Sibsagar, 1927. p. 62.

Kacharis defended themselves valiantly with bows and arrows, and were victorious at first, they were at last overpowered and forced to retreat with heavy loss. Then the Kacharis were pushed back to Namdang and the Ahoms captured Dergaon.¹

In 1531, the Ahoms again erected a fort at Marangi. This gave offence to Khunkhara or Khorapha, the Kachari king, and he sent his brother Detcha or Neocha to drive them out. A battle was fought, in which the Kacharis were routed and their commander was killed. Then the Ahoms pursued the Kacharis as far as their capital at Dimapur, on the left bank of the Dhansiri. The Kachari king fled from the capital, when a prince named Detsung or Dersongpha became the Kachari king.²

Dersongpha or Detsung, (1531-36) :

In 1536, Dersongpha quarrelled with the Ahoms, who again ascended the Dhansiri and sacked Dimapur, the capital. Dersongpha fled, but was followed, captured and put to death. After this invasion by the Ahoms, the Kacharis deserted Dimapur and the valley of Dhansiri, and, retreating further south, established a new capital at Maibong.³ In this war the Kacharis as well as the Ahoms were reported to have used cannon.⁴

Nirbhoyanarayan :

After Darsongpha, his son Madan Konwar by a daughter of a chief of Gaur, succeeded to the Kachari throne. On his accession Madan took a new name as Nirbhoyanarayan. He

¹ D. A. B., pp. 19-20. and K. B. p. 9.

² Ibid. pp. 24-26. and K. B. pp. 9-13. The K. B. mentions these wars very briefly but is quite consistent with the Ahom Source.

³ Deodhai Asam Buranji, pp.33-35.

⁴ Gait, A History of Assam p-96. Gait gives no reference for this interesting statement, which we cannot trace in any of the sources available to us.

was given an Ahom princess in marriage. It is said that this Kachari king promised an annual tribute to the Ahoms. The Kachari Rajas were thenceforward called "thapita-Sanchita" (established and preserved) by the Ahoms, a term which implied some degree of subordination. Nirbhoynarayan made his capital at Lakhindra-pur.¹

Dullabhnarayan and Meghnarayan :

Nirbhoynarayan was succeeded by Dullabhnarayan and he again by Maghnarayan. During the rule of these rulers, there was peace and order in the Kachari kingdom.²

Meghnarayan was succeeded by Yasanarayan. A silver coin discovered in the possession of an inhabitant of Kasipur, in the neighbourhood of Maibong, bears a date equivalent to 1583 and was issued by Yasanarayan Deb, "a worshipper of Hara Gauri, Siva and Durga of the line of Hachengsa."³

Sir Edward Gait in his History of Assam mentions Satrudaman alias Pratapnarayan as the successor of Yasanarayan of the discovered silver coin. But it is mentioned in the Kachari Buranji that Yasanarayan assumed the title of Pratapnarayan after defeating the Ahom army led by Sondar Gohain in 1606,⁴ and therefore the two appear to be identical.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Kacharis held the greater part of the Nowgong district and the North Cachar Hills and gradually extended their sway over the plains

¹ Kachari Buranji, pp. 19-20.

² Ibid. p. 20.

³ Gait, H. A., pp. 251-252.

⁴ Kachari Buranji, pp. 24-25.

of Cachar. The previous history of the last mentioned tract of territory is wrapped in oblivion, but there is a tradition that it was formerly included in the Tippera Kingdom, and was presented by a king of that country to a Kachari Raja who had married his daughter early in the seventeenth century.¹

Invasion of Jayantia by the Kacharis :

By this time, the Jayantia king Dhan Manik seized Prabhakar, the chief of Dimarua, whose family had formerly been vassals of the Kacharis. He appealed to the Kachari Raja, who demanded his release and, meeting with a refusal, invaded Dhanmanik's kingdom, routed his army, and compelled him to sue for peace. He subsequently acknowledged himself a tributary of the Kachari monarch by giving him two Jayantia princesses in marriage. The Jayantia king also made over his nephew and heir-apparent Yasamanik as a hostage. The latter was kept a prisoner at Brahmapur, which was afterwards renamed Khaspur. To commemorate his victory, the Kachari king assumed the title 'Asimardan.'²

War with the Ahoms :

Soon afterwards Dhanmanik died. Yasanarayan thereupon released Yasamanik from captivity and made him king of Jayantia, but he appears to have insisted on being recognized as his

¹ Gait, *A History of Assam*, p. 252.

² Gait, *A History of Assam*, pp. 252 and 262.
Kachari Buranji, p. 21.

overlord. Yasamanik resented this, but, being unable by himself to offer any effectual resistance to the Kacharis, he endeavoured to embroil them with the Ahom king, Pratap Singha. Yasamanik offered a princess to the Ahom monarch on condition that she would be escorted to the latter's capital through the Kachari territory. This proposal was vehemently opposed by the Kachari Raja Yasanarayan who did not see any necessity for deviating from the customary route between Assam and Jayantia, which lay through the territory of the petty chief referred to as Gobha Raja. The refusal of the Kachari king to permit the girl to be taken through his dominion led, as Yasamanik had hoped, to a war with the Ahoms. In 1606, the Ahom king Pratap Singha despatched Sondar Gohain at the head of a powerful army, which succeeded in capturing several Kachari garrisons. The Gohain then proposed to attack Maibong, the Kachari capital. There arose in Cachar a great leader in the person of prince Bhimbal Konwar. The Kacharis under the leadership of this powerful prince subsequently surprised and destroyed the Ahom garrison at Raha by killing Sondar Gohain on the battlefield. The Kachari Raja now assumed the title of Pratapnarayan and changed the name of his capital Maibong into Kirtipu. With this terminated the vassalage of the Kacharis. Yasanarayan stopped payment of the tribute and behaved as an independent sovereign.¹ At this period the Kacharis were in possession of the portion of the Nowgong district which lies to the South of Raha.²

As we close our study in the year 1603, our discussion of the Kachari history may stop at the end of Yasanarayan's reign.

¹ Kachari Buranji, pp. 21-25.

² Gait, A History of Assam, p. 253.

The following is a list of the subsequent Kachari kings :

Nara Narayan		
Bhimbāl Narayan		
Indra Vallabh	1637	
Birdarpa Narayan		—1681
Garud dhvaj	1681	—1695
Makaradhvaj	1693	(accession)
Udayaditya		
Tamradhvaj		—1708 (death)
Suradarpa	1708	(accession)
Haris Chandra Narayan	1721	(reigning)
Kirti Chandra Narayan	1736	(reigning)
Sandhi Kari	1765	(reigning)
Haris Chandra Narayan (Bhupati)	1771	(reigning)
Krishna Chandra	1790	—1813 (death)
Govinda Chandra	1813	—1830

CHAPTER X

THE KINGDOM OF JAYANTIA

The Kingdom of Jayantia was an independent state up to 1826, when it was annexed to the adjacent British territory.¹ It included the Jayantia hills and a plain tract adjacent to the south of these hills stretching as far as the Barak river in the Sylhet district. The former was the original abode of the Jayantia rulers and the latter was a subsequent annexation. But it was that plain tract which was first known as the Kingdom of Jayantia, and was mentioned in the Pauranic and Tantrik literature as reputed for its sacred shrine of Jayanti Devi in the Faljur Pargana.

There is a tradition that in early times Jayantia was under the domination of a dynasty of Brahminical rulers. It is mentioned in the Mahabharata that at the time of Rajasuya sacrifice of King Yudhisthira, Indra Sen Rai was the Brahmin ruler of this kingdom and for his pride and arrogance, he is said to have been humiliated by the second Pandava, Bhima. For the subsequent several centuries there are no materials with which a reasonable and scientific history of this kingdom can be written. In this connection, Mr. S. K. Dutta, Director of Historical Studies in Assam, says that "like so many Hindu Kingdoms of the distant past, it was blotted out of existence by some hill chief who swooped down with his followers and established themselves there."² This kingdom was mentioned as Narirajya in Jaimini's Mahabharata. In the medieval period, it was also considered as a matriarchal kingdom.³

¹ Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of Bengal*, 1884, Calcutta, pp. 4-5,

² S. K. Dutta, *Introduction of Jayantia Buranji*.

³ J. A. S. B. *Review of History of Assam of Gait*, Vol. III. by P. N. Bhattacharyya, 1927, p. 848.

The Khasi and Jayantia hills are now inhabited by the Khasis and Syntengs, who are said to be the remnant of the first Mongolian overflow into India, who established themselves in their present habitat at a very remote period and who owing to their isolated position, maintained their independence, while their congeners in the plains below were submerged in subsequent streams of immigration from the same direction. Linguistic evidence points to the conclusion that some form of Mon-Khmer speech was once the language of the whole of further India. The speakers of this speech were not the autochthones of this region, but immigrated from North-West China, and dispossessed the aborigines of that place.¹

It has been observed that this vigorous and sturdy race have preserved their ancestral institutions and other distinctions through many centuries in the face of the attractions offered by the alien forms of culture around them. In the first place, their social organisation presents one of the most perfect examples still surviving of matriarchy which governs every aspect of Khasi family-life. Among them property descends through the female. The head of a Khasi community is succeeded not by his own but by his sister's son. The male members are considered as nobody in the law of inheritance.² The next characteristic of the Khasis which marks them out for special notice is their method of divination for ascertaining the causes of misfortune and the remedies to be applied. The other remarkable feature of the Khasi usage is the custom which prevails to this day, of setting up of great memorials of rough stone, in the shape of monoliths, erected in memory of their dead. Similar monoliths are found amongst the Hos and Mundas, in Chota Nagpur, Central India, who are also the speakers of Mon-Khmer speech.³

¹ Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Calcutta, 1904, Vol. II, p. 1.

² P. R. T. Gurdon, *The Khasis*, London, 1914, p. 82.

³ P. R. T. Gurdon, *The Khasis*, pp. 144-45.

From the existing sources, it is impossible to write the early history of this kingdom. Similar to other tribes of ancient India, the tendency of the Khasis and Syntengs was also to split up into numerous petty principalities each under its own chief. Sometimes an ambitious leader was found to win and annex certain of the adjacent territories, and the kingdom thus formed would continue to exist until the weakness of his successors gave an opportunity for the prevailing disintegrating tendency to assert itself, when it would again dissolve into a number of small independent communities.¹ We cannot ascertain if or when the adjacent states of Khasis, Jayantias, Syntengs and Khyram were under the allegiance of a single powerful sovereign. Neither historical records nor the scanty references in the annals of the other kings help us to write the ancient history of this portion of Indian territory in the real sense of the term.

The first reference to this tract in the records of other states is found in the Vangsavali of the Koch Kings at about the middle of the sixteenth century. At that time, the two most prominent chiefs seem to have been the Rajs of Jayantia and Khyram respectively. The name of the former king is not mentioned. Gait says that it may be either Bargohain or Bijoymanik, to whom he has assigned the periods from 1548-64 and 1564-60 respectively. But we cannot agree here with Gait. We have already shown in our study of the Koches that the invasions of the north-eastern frontier by the Koch King Nara Narayna were taking place between 1547 to 1562. So according to Gait these occurred in the reign of Bar Gohain. But Gait has already made it clear that he assumed all these dates by counting back the reign of Dhanmanik who ruled at the end of the sixteenth century, and who is known to have been contemporary to the Kchaari King Yasa Narayan, who issued dated Coins. But the full history of the reign of Bar Gohain is given in the Jayantia Buranji,² in which we do not find any mention of the Koch invasion. We also do not know whether or not Gait was in possession of this chronicle, but in any case we must place the reign of Bar Gohain in an earlier period, in view of this serious discrepancy.

¹ Gait, *The History of Assam*, p. 260.

² S. K. Bhuyan, J. B., *Gauhati*, 1937, pp. 4-10.

Whatever might be the name of the King, it is mentioned in the Vangsavali that the Raja of Jayantia was defeated and slain by Nara Narayan's brother Chilarai ; and his son, after acknowledging himself a tributary, and promising to pay regular tribute, was set up in his place. It is further mentioned that the vassal Jayantia prince was not allowed to strike coins in his own name but in the name of his kingdom only.¹ Gait has confirmed the above fact when he remarked that "this story may perhaps explain why so few Jaintia coins bear the name of the King in whose reign they were struck, but are simply described as coins of the illustrious ruler of Jaintiapur."²

The Khyram King Viryyavanta (Gunilanta³), whose capital was at Nong Krem, not far from Shillong, seeing the fate of the neighbouring Jayantia King, made his submission voluntarily and undertook to pay an annual tribute of a considerable amount.⁴ It is mentioned in the Rajamala, or chronicles of the Kings of Tippera, that about the same time as that of the Koch invasion of Jayantia, the Tippera King Manik also invaded that kingdom. But the above statement is refuted by Gait who considers it too vague to deserve credence.⁵

It is mentioned in the Buranji that the last of the four Brahmanical rulers of Jayantia were Kedareshvar Rai, Dhaneshvar Rai, Kandarpa Rai and Jayanta Rai. Regarding the first three kings the Buranjis did not say anything, but of Jayanta Rai it is said that he had no male issue. At last, in his old age, he got a female child, whom he named Jayanti Devi, according to the name of his favourite goddess Gauri. Jayanti Devi was married to

¹ D. R. V., pp. 81-82.

² J. A. S. B. 1895, pp. 242-43.

³ This is the form given by Gait. The published version of the "Vangsavali" edited by H. C. Goswami, gives Gunilanta which appears to be an adjective meaning "noble."

⁴ D. R. V. pp. 84-85.

⁵ Gait, A History of Assam, p. 262.

Lantabar, the royal priest. At the death of her father, Jayanti succeeded to the throne and assumed the title "Rani Singha."¹ After sometime Lantabar was exiled for his profligacy and re-married one Matsyodari, who gave birth to a son named Bar Gohain. From the very childhood, Bar Gohain was found to be noble and brave. In his early age he is said to have fought and defeated Muhammad Sultan, the Muslim chief of neighbouring Sultanpur and occupied it. Next Bar Gohain attacked the kingdom of Rani Singha but was defeated at the hands of Bhim, the general of Jayanti Devi. Having learnt Bar Gohain to be the son of Lantabar and Matsyodari, Jayanti Devi took him as her nephew (sister's son) and made him the heir-apparent. On the death of Jayanti Devi, Bar Gohain ascended the throne of Jayanti. He is said to have been succeeded by the following rulers : Bijoymanik, Parbatrai, Dhanmanik, Yasamanik, Sundar Rai, Yasamat rai, Rani Singha, Lakshmi Singha, Pratap Singha, Ram Singha and Saru Konwar. The above name 'Rani Singha' testifies that the list is not in chronological order.²

The above name 'Parbat rai' (the Lord of the Hills) convinced Gait that it was he who extended the sway of the Jayantia Kings into the plain tract at the foot of his ancestral kingdom in the hills.³ But this seems improbable for there is another Jyantia King named Choto Parbat Rai' who ruled from 1636-1647, of whom nothing like that is recorded in the chronicles. It seems unlikely that these names should have any special significance.

¹ The accession of ruling queen deserves notice, since queens ruling in their own right are almost unheard of in Hindu India. It is clear that the matriarchal traditions of the Jayantias, though evidently overlaid by Hindu Law, made this possible. Many impossible tales are told of her by tradition where she has almost the status of a goddess.

² Jayantia Buranji, pp. 1-10.

³ Gait A. History of Assam, p. 261.

In the reign of the Jayantia King, Dhan Manik, some Kachari merchants used to send rice and other commodities for sale to Syrat (Sylhet) in the dominion of the Jayatia King, through Mulagul. The traders from Bengal used to purchase them from there. The people of the Jayantia King demanded customs from them on account of the use of their market-place. Once some of the commodities of the Kachari merchants were seized by some of the people of the Jayantia King. At that time the Kachari King was Yasa Narayan, who reigned at the end of the sixteenth century, as is confirmed by a silver coin, which bears a date equivalent to 1583, and was issued by Yasa Narayan Deva, "a worshipper of Hara Gauri, Siva and Durga, of the line of Hachengsa."¹ The Kachari King marched against and defeated the Jayantias and fixed Mulagul as the boundary between the two kingdoms. After some time, the Kacharis treacherously murdered a number of Jayantias whom they invited in a feast on the bank of the river Kapili. Next a Muslim chief Jamal Khan invaded the country of the Kacharis after crossing the river Barak, and erected a fort at Khaspur, in the territory of the Jayantia king. This time there arose among the Kacharis a very powerful warrior in the person of a prince named Bhimbal, who attacked and defeated the Muslims and on the way back captured Dhanmanik, the King of Jayantia. Subsequently a treaty was concluded in which Dhanmanik gave his daughter Sandhyavati by name and his nephew Yasamanik as hostages to the Kachari king. On the death of Dhanmanik, Jasamanik was released and succeeded to the throne of Jayantia in 1605.² We close our thesis in the year 1603, when Pratap Singha came to the Ahom throne. Therefore our present study of the history

¹ Botham, J. A. S. B., 1912, Vol. VIII, p. 556.

² Jayantia Burauji, pp. 10-13, 1937.

of the Jayantias may stop at the beginning of the reign of Yasamanik, who ruled from 1605-1625. The following is a list of the subsequent kings.

Sundar Rai	1625	1636
Choto Parbat Rai	1636	1647
Yasamanta Rai	1647	1660
Vana Singha	1660	1669
Pratap Singha	1669	
Lakshmi Narayan	1669	1697
Ram Singha	1697	1708
Jaya Narayan	1708	1729
Bar Gohain II	1729	1770
Chatra Singha	1770	1781
Jatra Narayan	1718	1786
Vijoy Narayan	1786	1789
Ram Singha II	1789	1832
Rajendra Singha	1832	1835

CHAPTER XI

THE CHUTIAS

The Chutias are the indigenous people of Assam. The majority of them now occupy the present districts of Lakhimpur and Sibsagar. Their original language which was known to the Deoris, was definitely Bodo, but their physical features indicate the infusion of Shan blood among them. This can be explained by pointing out that they are the next neighbours of the Shans of South-East Asia. Some of them are also found at present at Darrang and Duars area.

According to the Assamese chronicles, the Chutia country was situated to the west of the Udaigiri mountains (Brahmakunda and the ranges bounding Khampti on the west), the hills on the south were inhabited by the Kacharis and the Nagas, to the west it extended as far as the country of the Kushans, a Hindu tribe dwelling in the neighbourhood of Bisnath (perhaps the kingdom of Kamrup), and on the north the area stretched up to the hills of the Amut Miri (perhaps the ranges of the Himalayas, bordering north-eastern Assam). There were originally three races inhabiting the country, the Borahis, the Morans and the Chutias, of whom the last one was the ruling tribe. According to the Mau chronicles, it was upon this people that the invasions of the Shans took place early in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹

Dalton contends that the original seat of the Chutias was somewhere near the sources or bordering the hill course of the Subansiri. They are described as having occupied, like the Abors and the Miris of the present time, large villages on lofty mountains, having no dependence on each other and acknowledging no leadership of any powerful authority.² Endle says that

¹ Assamese Manuscript, incorporated in H. S., N. Elias, Calcutta, 1876, p. 61.

² Dalton, Sketch of the History of the Chutia kings, incorporated in An Outline grammar of the Deori-Chutia language, W. B. Brown, Shillong, 1895, p. 77.

there were two immigrations from the north and the north-west into the rich valley of the Brahmaputra ; the first, entering north-eastern Bengal and western Assam through the valley of the Tista, Dharla and Sankosh, founded what was formerly the kingdom of Kamrup ; the second, making its way through the Subansiri, Dibong and Dihong valleys into Assam, were called the Chutias and held sway for a long period.¹

It is mentioned in the Assamese chronicles that Asambhinna, the first Chutia king, dwelt on the banks of the Brahmaputra with his seven brothers. In his reign, a brahmin came from Banaras and converted the whole of the eight brothers to the brahminism. The brahmin was renowned for his learning and piety and for these qualities he succeeded in marrying the daughter of Asambhinna. The seven brothers were not unanimous at the death of Asambhinna on the question of succession to the throne. Eventually all of them agreed to place the brahmin on the throne. The brahmin in turn was succeeded by one of the descendants of Asambhinna called Indradev Raja, who ruled for 30 years. This king was succeeded by 31 kings in regular succession, the last of whom was called Lekroy Raja. This king had four sons, Burora, Maisura, Kolita and Kossi Raja. On the death of Lekroy Raja, before the succession took place, Sam-lung-pha, the Mau king, invaded the country. Burora was killed on the battlefield, Maisura fled with a number of followers to Maing Bing (near present Bisnath) ; Kolita fled westward with a considerable force and established a kingdom on the bank of the Brahmaputra. Kossi Raja was captured and ultimately placed on the throne on condition of tribute. Sam-lung-pha then appointed a Tamon (Governor) over the vassal kingdom and returned to Mogaung. After 5 months, the Tamon was poisoned to death, when Kossi Raja became independent. Early in the thirteenth century, when Sukapha invaded Assam, Kossi Raja was the ruling king.²

1. Endle S. *The Kacharis*, London, 1911, p. 4.

1. *Assamese Manuscript*, H. S. pp. 61-62.

The chronicle mentions 32 reigns from Indradev downward over an aggregate of 554 years. The length of the reigns of Asambhinna and the brahmin are not mentioned. Supposing them to be the average, the accession of Asambhinna can be placed roughly in middle of the seventh century, A. D.

In the extreme north-eastern frontier of Assam, there are many archaeological ruins, ascribed to Bhisimaka and Sisupala. The history of Bhisimaka and his daughter, Rukmini, is mentioned in the Bhagavata and the Vishnu Purana. It is stated that this kingdom was known as Vidarbha and its capital was at Kundil, on the bank of the river of the same name. Sankar Dev's 'Rukmini Haran' also narrates this history. The story of Rukmini's marriage with Krishna against Sisupala's opposition is known to all. Choudhury suggests that there was actually a prince, Bhisimaka by name in this corner of the province in remote past.¹

According to the Chutia Buranji, the founder of the Chutia kingdom was Birbar or Birpal, who claimed descent from Bhisimaka and reigned in A. D. 1189. The same source gives a list of 10 kings, the last of whom was killed in 1523.² So we can estimate the dates of these kings roughly by allowing about 35 years to each. The dates of the Chutia kings mentioned in the Chutia and Deodhai Buranjis are not correct. So we have arranged the chronology on the basis of the Ahom Buranji, the dates of which seem more reliable on the basis of the available synchronisms.

Birpal (1189-1224) :

Birpal had his capital on a hill called Svarnagiri. He assumed the title Gayapal. The surname 'Pal' seems to be an imitation of the Kamrup kings of the dynasty of Brahmapal. Birpal must have been identical with Kossi Raja of the other account

¹ H. C. P. A. pp. 197-98.

² See p. 89.

and it was he who encountered the followers of Sukapha. His wife was Rupavati, who gave birth to a son named Gauri Narayan who succeeded his father in c. 1224.¹

Gauri Narayan (1224-1259) :

Gauri Narayan was one of the most powerful of the Chutia kings. He brought under his sway the tribes of the neighbouring mountains, Rangalgiri, Kalgiri, Nilgiri, Dhavalgiri, and Chandragiri.² After conquering the whole north-eastern hilly areas of Assam, he assumed the proud title, 'Lord of the Hills.'³ At the head of a large army, he descended into the valley of the Brahmaputra, and attacked and defeated a king named Bhadra Sen, who ruled on the Svetgiri mountain. In this campaign he received rich booty and many prisoners of war of the brahmin, Tanti, Sonari, Sutar and Kumar castes. He placed Bhadra Sen's son on the throne as the vassal king and built his capital at Ratnapur whence he was called Ratnadhvaj Pal.⁴

Gauri Narayan then made arrangements to attack a neighbouring king named Nyayapal. This king being aware of the growing power and influence of the Chutias, sent immediately the terms of surrender with costly gifts. Ratnadhvaj accepted the proffered alliance, which was cemented by his union with one of the daughters of Nyayapal. Next he directed his attention to the consolidation of the conquered territory. He built a line of forts, along the foot of the hills, probably to restrain the inroads of the bordering hill tribes. He dug large tanks and built many temples.⁵

¹ C. B., R. P. H. R. A. pp. 19-20.

² Ibid.

³ Outline grammar of Deori-Chutia Language, p. 78.

⁴ C. B., R. P. H. R. A. pp. 19-20.

⁵ An Outline grammar of Deori-Chutia Language, pp. 78-79.

For one of his sons named Vijayadhvaj Pal, when of age, Ratnadhvaj sent an embassy to the Kamatesvar, evidently Sandhya, demanding a princess of that family in marriage. The Kamata king refused to agree to the request. Ratnadhvaj then marched with a large army towards Kamata, constructing a road with forts at certain intervals. The Kamatesvar, astonished at the energy of these measures and the rapidity of their execution, made peace without resistance and gave one of his daughters in marriage to the Chutia prince.¹

The ruler of Gaur made friendship with Ratnadhvaj, who sent one of his sons to that country for education. As a token of friendly relations both the rulers exchanged water from the Parasuramkunda and the Ganges for religious purposes. This suggests that the ruler of Gaur must have been a Hindu by religion. Evidently this ruler was either Visvarup Sen or Kesav Sen, the successors of Lakshman Sen, who ruled at least up to 1260.² Unfortunately the Chutia prince died there and the corpse was sent to Ratnadhvaj, while engaged in building a new city, which was accordingly named 'Sadiya' (Sa-dead body; diya-given or cremated).³

Ratnadhvaj was succeeded by his son, Vijayadhvaj Pal (1259-94), of whom and six successive kings, Vikramadhvaj (1294-1329), Garuradhvaj (1329-64), Sankhadhvaj (1364-99), Mayuradhvaj (1399-1434), Jayadhvaj (1434-69), and Karmadhvaj (1469-1504), the Chutia chronicles record nothing.⁴ It is mentioned in the Assam Buranji that during the reign of Sutupha, the Ahom king, (1364-76), there were frequent disputes between the Chutias and the Ahoms. In 1376, the Chutia king, evidently Sankhadhvaj Pal, met Sutupha at Chapaguri on the Safrai river and murdered him treacherously.⁵ The same source mentions that Tyaokhamti (1380-89), the successor of Sutupha, led an expedition against the Chutias to avenge the murder of the Ahom king. The Chutia king is to have escaped to the hills.⁶

¹ Ibid.

² H. B. Vol. 1. pp. 226-27 & 254-55.

³ Brown W. B. An Outline grammar of the Deori-Chutia Language, p. 78.

⁴ C. B., R. P. H. R. A. pp. 19-20.

⁵ Barua H. K., A. B., p. 15.

⁶ A. H. B. p. 49.

Dhir Narayan or Dharmadhvaj Pal (1504-23):

In the beginning of the sixteenth century, Dhir Narayan was the ruling Chutia king. He was very powerful. He had a son named Sadhak Narayan and a daughter, Sadhani. The king married his daughter to a Chutia chief named Nitipal, who was a good warrior and who was appointed Yuvaraj.¹

In 1513, Dhir Narayan invaded the Ahom country with an army and a flotilla of boats. His land forces were defeated at Dikhaumukh by the Ahoms, who were also victorious in a naval encounter at Sirati. The Chutias lost heavily in both the engagements and were compelled to retreat, when Suhummung, the Ahom king, took possession of Mungkhrang and Namdang. Dhir Narayan then made friendship with the king of Mungkaṅg in order to encounter the Ahoms. It is stated in the Shan chronicles that the King Chau-ka-phá (1493-1517), accepted the invitation of the Chutia king and sent a big army to undertake the conquest of Assam. The combined Chutia and Nara troops overpowered the Ahom garrisons posted on the border. It is mentioned in the same chronicle that the Ahoms made peace with the Naras by sending large presents of cattle and horses to the king of Mungkaṅg.²

In 1520, the Chutias again attacked the Ahom fort at Mungkhrang. The Ahom commander in charge of the fort was killed in the battle and the whole garrison was utterly routed by the Chutias. As a result an extensive tract of Ahom territory up to Mungkhrang fell into the hands of the Chutias. In 1522, the Ahoms engaged themselves in another encounter with the Chutias near the mouth of the Sessa river and recovered the territory up to the Tiphao river from the possession of the Chutias and erected a fort there.³

¹ C. B., R. P. H. R. A. pp. 19-20.

² H. S. p. 41.

³ Barua H. K., A. B. p. 15.

In 1523, the Chutias laid siege to the Ahom fort on the bank of the Tiphao river, but met with a stubborn resistance. Then they fortified their position bordering the Ahom territory. Next the Ahoms took the offensive and in an encounter defeated the Chutias and forced them to retreat as far as the Kaitara hill. The Chutias then made their stronghold on the Chandangiri hill and checked the Ahom advance by rolling down heavy stones. Ultimately the Chutias were defeated by the Ahom army near Jangmungkhang (or Mathadang).¹ Dhir Narayan and his son-in-law Nitipal were killed in open battle, when the whole Chutia army was routed and many of them found themselves prisoners in the hands of the victors. It is said that the Chutia princess Sadhani, preferring death to captivity, killed herself with a spear.² Sadhak Narayan, the son of Dhir Narayan, was taken by the conquerors. The Ahom king gave an estate bounded on the north by the Kabirar Ali, on the south by the Brahmaputra river, on the east by the Rota and on the west by the Dhansiri river, to Sadhak Narayan along with a number of the Chutia families. It is said that the Ahom king issued a copper plate confirming this grant, but it is not in existence now.³

Early in 1527, the Chutias again revolted against the Ahom supremacy. They were soon reduced to submission, but according to a tradition preserved by Gait, not to be found in any of the Buranjis available to us, the Dihingia Gohain lost his life during the disturbance. Similarly in 1542, another Chutia raid is recorded during the reign of Suklenmung.⁴ It is mentioned in the Ahom Buranji that in 1565, the Chutias plundered the Ahom territory at Namrup and Kheram.⁵ In 1572, according to the evidence not available in the Buranjis, there was a Chutia insurrection in the Ahom territory, which was pacified by an Ahom expedition.⁶

¹ Ibid.

² Barua J. K. C. B. Jorhat, 1926, p. 12.

³ C. B., R. P. H. R. A., p. 20.

⁴ H. A. p. 90.

⁵ A. H. B. p. 89.

⁶ A. D. G. Lakhimpur, p. 23.

CHAPTER XII

THE NAGAS

The form Naga is that commonly used in India. In Assam itself these people are generally known as Naga. These are one of the most numerous hill tribes of Assam. Towards the northern end of the hills dividing Assam and Bengal from Burma and the south of the Brahmaputra valley, the Nagas have their present abode. They occupy the area from the valley of the Dhansiri in the west¹ to the deep inroads into the hills of Patkai on the western border of Burma ; towards the north they occupy the whole hilly region bordering upon the districts of Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur, and, to the southerly direction, they are found in the north of the Cachar district and within the boundary of Manipur. The above territory is divided into two ; the first being the administered district of Naga hills and the second a gradually diminishing tract of unadministered territory, touching in the east the high hills dividing upper Assam from upper Burma. From the ethnological point of view, it has been found that the Nagas in separate areas differ from one another in physique, culture and language. In spite of their differences, they have enough in common to unite them in a particular ethnical unit to be distinguished from the other tribes of the same stock.

The Nagas are associated commonly with the Kukis, from whom, however, they are essentially distinct in customs and personal appearance. It is a distinguishing particular to the Naga tribes that they are not a migratory or wandering people, and while the hill Kacharis and Kukis continually change their

¹ E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1872, p. 38-39. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Dalton described the river Kopilk in the Nowgong district, as the western, and the eastern frontier of the Hill Tippera as the southern boundary of the Naga land. Now the area has no doubt been diminished at the cost of the Nagas, making room for the people of the plain.

locations, seldom keeping their villages more than three years in one spot, the Nagas remain fixed for a long time. Again, the Nagas are remarkable as using no weapons but the javelin and dao, a sort of bill common to the Buimans, Shans and most of the hill tribes except the Khasis. In common with the Kukis and Garos, they abstain strictly from milk, butter and ghee looking on the use of them with great aversion. The religion of the Nagas is limited to a few superstitious practices.¹

Though ordinarily the term Naga is used as a generic name, the Nagas are actually divided into various classes among themselves. Dalton divides the whole Naga race broadly into two divisions, east and west of Dhansiri river.² But this is not conclusive. The Nagas of the Naga hills district are mainly of four classes; the Semas, the Angamis, the Rengmas and the Lhotas. These are called western Nagas and the territory in their possession extends far beyond the administered district of Naga hills. Thus the Semas inhabit the valleys of the rivers Dayang, Tuza and Tita together with the mountain ranges and plateaus that separate their waters. Hutton considers this class to be the most primitive of all the Naga tribes.³ The Semas are bordered by the Angamis on the south. They occupy the whole region to the north of Manipur. Butler described them "by far the most powerful and most warlike of all the Naga tribes."⁴ The Rengmas are on the west of the Semas, inhabit spurs of the long ridge running north-east from the Nidzakra hill, through the Therugu hill to the wokha hill, and are bounded on the south by the Angamis and on the north and west by the Lhotas. Some of them are found in the Mikir hills.⁵ The Lhotas occupy a piece of territory roughly covering the drainage area of the middle and lower Dayang and its tributaries, down to the point where it reaches to the plain.⁶

¹ J. A. S. B. 1840, p. 836.

² E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1872, p. 38-39.

³ J. H. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas* London, 1921, pp. 3-4.

⁴ Butler's *Account of the Naga tribes*, 1873, A. Mackenzie, *North-East Frontier of Bengal*, Cal. 1884, p. 84.

⁵ J. P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, London, 1937, pp. 1-2.

⁶ J. P. Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, London, 1922, p. 1.

By far the most numerous and significant of the sections are in possession of an unadministered territory populated by the Naga tribes more or less closely related to those within the district. The Kacch Nagas are at the south-west hills of the Naga hill district. The Aos are found to the north of the Semas up to the river Dikhau on the south-east, and roughly occupy a portion of Naga hills, bordered by the edge of the plain on the north-west, the Konyaks on the north-east and the Semas and the Lhotas on the south-west. Mills says that the Aos in former times occupied a big slice of present Sema territory and extended at least to the Wokha-Bhandary bridle path in the present Lhota country.¹ The Konyak Nagas are found at the north-east corner of the Naga hill district between Dikhau and Disai rivers and to the north of the Patkai range. The Changs and the Sangtams occupy the territory adjacent to the Konyaks in the southerly direction. At the extreme east there live the Yachumis, Tukomis, Naked Rengmas and the Tangkhuls. To the north of the Tang-khuls and east of the Yachumis and Sangtams are the Kalyo-kengyus.²

The tradition of the Nagas point to the fact that they have migrated from the south to the north. But in the case of the Kacch Nagas, there seem to have been an exception. They are said to have migrated from the direction of the Japvo mountain in the north.³

The Nagas between the rivers Dhansiri and Dihing differ from the Angamis in north Cachar. The Nagas east of the Dayang river are divided into broad classes under hereditary chiefs, who appear to exercise great influence over their subjects.⁴ Haimendorf has observed that the chiefs possess better houses and richer furniture. They have their councils of the adult male members of the aristocratic classes, which decide all quarrels

¹ J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, London, 1926, P. 4.

² J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, London, 1921, pp. 5-5.

³ *Ibid.* p. 6.

⁴ E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1872, pp. 38-39.

and settle disputes over field boundaries and the like. There is no animosity or opposition between the aristocrats and the commoners. They choose their wives from their own class, and only the children of such couples can claim their father's office.¹

The case is different with the Nagas of the southern region. They have no kind of internal government. The Nagas of the Dayang river, including those of north Cachar, acknowledge no chief among themselves and deride the idea of such a personage among others. They appoint as spokesmen of the village some elders who have the reputation of superior wisdom or perhaps more frequently the influence of wealth. They are called "Gaon-Bura" (leader of the village) and assume some degree of authority through the mutual understanding between themselves and the ordinary villagers. But the authority of the chief is challengeable. Thus, in case of misuse it appears to be resisted and defied. As a matter of fact, the tribe utterly abjures the idea of subjection of any one from among themselves. The post of "Gaon-Bura" is neither hereditary nor in every case held throughout life. The petty disputes and disagreements about property and social wrongs are settled by a Council of Elders. The litigants voluntarily submit to their arbitration.²

The Naga ideology of social constitution seems comparable to the Doctrine of "Maha-Sammata" of Buddhism.³ The

¹ C. V. F. Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, London, 1939, p. 11.

² R. Stewart, J. A. S. B., 1855, *Notes on North Cachar*, p. 582.

³ *Dighanikaya*, Vol. III. pp. 92-93.

A. L., Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, London, 1954, p. 82.

(Early in the Cosmic Cycle mankind lived in a free atmosphere. There was no necessity of food, clothing, property, family, government or law. Then Cosmic decay began. Men lost their primeval glory and feeling for food and shelter came into existence. They entered into agreements among themselves, accepting institutions, property and family. Next there appeared cases of theft, adultery and other crimes. Hence the people assembled together and decided to appoint one man among them to maintain order in return for a share of the produce of their fields and herds. He was called the "Great Chosen One" (Maha-Sammata).

appointment of the "Gaon-Bura" has much in common with the "Contractual Theory of State" of Plato, which has in recent centuries been specially connected with the names of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, in Europe. What we understand by the term "Constituted Sovereignty" in modern society, is absent in the Naga community. But it is surprising to note that this want of law and government, does not lead them to anarchy and confusion, rather their culture is distinguished by their social integrity, communal unity, and indefatigable courage and energy. Among the western Nagas the Aroongs are said to be the most primitive of all. According to Stewart, the Nagas are "the rudest of the aborigines of Hindusthan."¹

By nature, the Nagas are honest, peaceful and hospitable. They are very conservative. They are not at all enthusiastic about adopting new ideas or new ways of life. They are vindictive and cruel ; but for these propensities of their nature, they are orderly without law.²

As to the origin of the Nagas, some are of the opinion that they are the descendants of the Dyaks of Borneo. The latter, in the remote past, found their way through the straits of Tenasserim, southern Burma and Arakan, until they were either stopped by the vast walls of the Himalayas or by the southward trend of Mongolian peoples. The idea was further strengthened by their resemblance in matters of counting, names for domestic implements, village architecture, and by the head-hunting propensities to the Dyaks. Their love for marine shells was considered another point in favour of their bygone habitat near the sea. But this old idea has now been practically abandoned in favour of their Tibeto-Burman origin. According to this they are considered as an offshoot of the earliest migration from the neighbourhood of the Kiumhung range, carried out first by the Chins, who located themselves far to the south in the hills between Lushai and the Irrawadi valley.³

¹ R. Stewart, J. A. S. B., 1855, Notes on North Cachar, p. 582.

² W. C. Smith, The Ao Naga tribe of Assam, London, 1925, p. 8.

³ L. W. Shakespeare, History of U. Assam, U. Burma and N. E. Frontier, London, 1914, pp. 195-7.

Both physical features and other aspects of material culture point to the existence of a Negrito strain among the Nagas. Hutton finds traces of Papuan and Melanesian features among them.¹ Though not common among the Semas, Angamis and Lhotas, instances of woolly hair have been noticed among the Aos,² Rengmas,³ Phoms, Yamchings of the Konyaks,⁴ in the Kaca Naga country, particularly in North Cachar ; the Thados have this strain with prominent jaws.⁵ The frequency of woolly hair in the north indicates that the former inhabitants had a greater infusion of ulotrichous blood. Hutton notices also prominent jaws and small stature, associated with the Negrito strain, among the Aos, Phoms and other Konyaks.⁶

The Naga reverence for the ficus, indicates, in the opinion of Hutton, a Negroid cult, spread over the Oceanic area ; he suspects also a Negroid belief in the practice of hanging combs of bees and wasps in the entrance to the houses of some Nagas, found also in the Andaman Islands.⁷ The practice of exposure of the dead or the tree burial of the bodies of those who die by an unnatural death among some Nagas, as among the people of Indonesia, the use of a kind of thorn-lined trap for catching fish among the Nagas of the north and Thades, as in Melanesia,⁸ the belief in a perilous path, which is required to be passed by the spirit of dead, common among the tribes as in the Andamans and the Pacific area, and other material facts and specimens of art are taken to be survivals of the Negrito strain among these remote tribes of Assam.⁹

¹ C. R. I., 1931, I, I, pp. 443, and H. C. P. A. p. 127.

² Introduction to Smith's Ao Naga tribe, XII.

³ Mills, The Rengma Nagas, pp. 16-17.

⁴ Hutton M. A. S. B. XI, p. 17.

⁵ Hutton, Introduction to Shaw's (Note on the Thado Kukis), J. A. S. B., (N. S.) XXIV, p. 4.

⁶ Hutton, Man in India, VI, pp. 257.

⁷ M.A. S. B., XI, p. 64.

⁸ Balfour, Man, 1925, p. 21.

⁹ H. C. P. A., pp. 128-29.

Long before the Ahom conquest of the Brahmaputra valley took place in the early part of the thirteenth century, the Nagas were in possession of a vast tract over the north-eastern area of Assam from the hills of the north Cachar to Patkai, and maintained their independent status. During the whole period of Ahom rule in Assam, sporadic clashes between the Nagas and the Ahoms appear to have been one of the chief events of history. The Nagas who were particularly connected with these engagements were the residents of the hilly regions south of the present Sibsagar and Lakhimpur districts from the river Dayang to the further sources of Buri Dihing. This area was populated by the Nagas of Lhota, Ao and Konyak tribes. Some Buranjis mention tribes of Nagas by names but none of these names have any relation to the names used by modern anthropologists. Some do not mention the names of the Naga tribes at all, but only the names of the Naga villages against which expeditions were sent ; and again some refer to them merely by the general term "Naga" (pronounced Noga).¹

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Mackenzie observed the following sections of the Nagas to be the inhabitants of the region between the rivers Dayang and Buri Dihing. The Paniphatias, the Torphatias, the Doyingias, the Hatigurias, the Asringayas, or the Charmgayas, the Dopdarias, the Namsangias, the Tablungias, the Jaktungias, the Mulungias, the Changnois, the Jabokas, the Banphas, the Mutons, or Kulungs, the Panidurias, and the Borduarias.² Originally all these sections were Ao Nagas. In later times, at their western migration, they had been distinguished by the names of the Passes through which they descended to the plains.³ We shall show later that against many of the above sections of the Nagas, mentioned by the same name, the Ahom Kings sent expeditions. This fact makes it clear that in 1215, at the time of Sukapha's invasion of Upper Assam, the various Nagas were settled in their present habitat.

¹ Journal of the University of Gauhati, 1953, p. 46.

² A. Mackenzie, North-East Frontier of Bengal, Calcutta, 1884, pp. 93-94

³ E. Gait, A History of Assam, Calcutta, 1926, p. 325, 2nd Ed.

The acute love of freedom is, no doubt, the main reason for the Nagas of maintaining a state of perpetual hostility with the powerful neighbours, who wanted to bring them under their control. But, there were occasionally other reasons also. The Ahoms came to Assam from the Nara country through the land of the Nagas, and it was that land through which they wanted to maintain their diplomatic relations with the Naras. But neither the foundation of a new kingdom on the part of the Ahoms in the Brahmaputra valley, nor their maintenance of good relations with the Natas in the Hukong valley and upper Burma, were appreciated by the Nagas, who were, as a matter of fact, enjoying the complete sovereignty of the whole region from the valley of Dhansiri to the western frontier of upper Burma. And that was why they tried their best to resist the western migration of the Ahoms, as well as their maintenance of friendly relations with the Ahoms, as well as their maintenance of friendly relations with the king of Mungkang, whom they called "Bhai Raja" (Brother King). There was an economic necessity also. Paddy, pulse, chilli, pumpkin, cotton, ginger, black pepper, vegetables and iron were produced in the Naga areas in abundance. Among the other exports, cotton was one of the main products of the Naga hills. But by far the most essential of all the exports was salt. From Borhat to the interior of the Naga hills there were several salt springs and from these a considerable quantity of salt was formerly exported to the different parts of Assam.¹ From the record of 1840, it appears that the Nagas living near Jeypore, the Namsang, Pani Dwar, and Bar Dwar Nagas, lived chiefly by manufacturing salt, which they retailed to the people of the plains. There were in the lower hills eighty-five salt wells in all, of which the government was allowed to be absolute owner of only three, enjoying merely a right to a certain number of flues and fireplaces at each of the others. These rights Purunder Singha had regularly asserted.² So, it is a fact that many neighbours of the Nagas tried their utmost to dislodge them from their rich mother-land.

¹ R. Wilcox, *Selections from the Record of the Bengal Government, Calcutta, 1853*, pp. 24-25, and *Ao Nagas*, S. N. Mazumdar, Calcutta, 1925 p. 50.

² A. Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of Bengal, Calcutta, 1884*, p. 92.

It is mentioned in the Buranji that "Long after, one Khunkum was hunting buffaloes. He found a Naga slave named Khunchu. This slave was handed over to the King, Chaotai-pha, who took him into his favour."¹ This presumably implies that the Naga was found wandering in the forest and captured. We know that among the successors of Khunlung, who ruled at Ma-kau-Mung-Lung, there were two Tasubwas (kings) both Chau-tai-pha by name, after Khun-Kwot-Pha, who ruled from 1035-1050.² But the Buranji is clear in mentioning that the Chao-tai-pha in question was third in descent from Taolulu or (Chou-Lu-Lu), who succeeded the first Chao-tai-pha, who ruled from 1050-1062.³ Therefore the Tsawbwa Chao-tai-pha, here referred to must be the latter one, who succeeded Chao-Chang-Nyeur (Chau-Sang-Yau) in 1103 and ruled up to 1112.⁴ It is evident from the above that the Nagas were in good relations with the fore-fathers of Sukapha the Great, who founded the Ahom dynasty in Assam. Moreover, the word "slave" is significant in this connection. The fact that this Naga was captured and enslaved signifies that there were independent Naga tribes early in the beginning of the twelfth century.

By the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Nagas were in possession of the whole region bordering east of the Patkai hills surrounding the north-west frontier of the Nara kingdom of Mungkang (or Mogaung) in the Hukong valley. In 1224, Sukapha reached the village of Hatikhokia Nagas at the border of the Nara territory. Nothing further, in this connection is mentioned in the Buranji except that Sukapha went back to Mungkang with his followers and was in the plains of the Hukong valley for the next four years.⁵ We have already shown that between the rivers Dayang and Buri Dihing, there are some

¹ G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, p. 24.

² N. Elias, *History of the Shans*, Calcutta, 1876, pp. 16-17 and 26-27.

³ Same as (1) and (2) above.

⁴ Same as (2) above.

⁵ G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, p. 44.

Nagas called Hatigarias, and in the first quarter of the twentieth century the anthropologists have identified them as Ao Nagas.¹ We do not know whether the Hatikhokia Nagas, mentioned in the Buranji, are identical with the Hatigarias. Mills has observed that Aos are an old class of the Naga tribes and have long passed the zenith of its power. In former times, they occupied parts of the present Sema and Lhota country.² Apart from the above facts, from the geographical point of view, the Hatikhokia Nagas, early in the thirteenth century, appear to be a branch of the Aos. It is to these Ao Nagas that the Ahom kings assigned land grants in the plains to restrain them from hostilities.³ So, it seems that, early in the thirteenth century, the Hatikhokia Nagas were powerful enough to resist the external invaders. The later history will reveal that, almost on every occasion, Sukapha was resisted in his westward migration through the territory of the Nagas. So, we may presume that Sukapha's first expedition against the Hatikhokia Nagas was an unsuccessful one, and it was only on a second attempt through a different route that he was able with considerable difficulty to force his way across the passes.

In 1228, Sukapha came to the principal pass of the Daikham at the boundary of the Naga country. The Nagas of the Namtilikkangtai region, up to the river Khamjan, did not resist the advance of Sukapha. As soon as he crossed the river, the Nagas of the villages Kharukhu, Pungkang, Tithang, Binglao, Latema, Lanpang, Taru, Luknam, Luka, and Taputapa united in a group and attacked Sukapha.⁴ They, having been defeated, acknowledged the sovereignty of Sukapha by paying yearly tributes in the form of agricultural products to Kangkhrumung, who was appointed a governor by Sukapha himself.⁵ The next powerful centre of the Nagas was at Daikaorang (meaning

¹ S. N. Mazumder, *Ao Nagas*, Calcutta, 1925, p. 8.

² J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, London, 1926, p. 4.

³ *Ibid.* p. 11.

⁴ G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, p. 45.

⁵ G. Barua, *Assam Buranji*, Calcutta, 1876, p. 84.

a collection of nine hills). The Nagas of the villages Papuk, Tongkham, Khunkhat, Khuntung, Tanching, and Jakhang gave battle against the powerful army of Sukapha. A great number of people on both sides were killed in this battle. To horrify the neighbouring Nagas, Sukapha perpetrated inhuman atrocities towards the captured Nagas by cutting them into pieces and compelling some of them to eat the roasted flesh of their relatives.¹ But Sukapha was only partially successful in subjugating the Nagas. It is said that in the last encounter Sukapha was greatly helped by the Nagas whom he had conquered before.² It is mentioned in the Ahom Buranji that king Sukapha after conquering different countries appointed Katakis (Representatives) to realise tributes from them. Among the three mentioned, one was of Naga origin.³ So it is clear that during the rule of the early Ahom kings, some of the Nagas held very important posts in the administration. They appear at all times to have been divided ; some co-operated with the more civilized rulers of the land, while others staunchly maintained their independence.

The history of the next century and a half shows that Suka-pha's wise policy of appointing some Nagas in the key positions of the administration proved a success in building a newly founded Ahom empire, because we do not hear of any trouble from the Nagas until the year 1397, when Sudangpha, a fugitive of the village Habung, came to the throne. During this period there were troubles within and without. In the reign of Sukhangpha, there was a battle with the Kamatesvar and rebellions within the kingdom.⁴ In the reign of Sukhrangpha, there was a conspiracy of Chao Pulai, the Saring Raja,⁵ and in Sutupha's reign, there was battle with the Chutias.⁶ Moreover on two occasions

¹ G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, p. 45.

² H. C. Debgoswami, *Purani Assam Buranji*, Gauhati, 1922, p. 15.

³ G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, p. 38.

⁴ G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 47-49, Calcutta, 1930.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

there were no kings in the country.¹ It is significant that, during all these disturbances, the Nagas are not mentioned as joining the opponents of the Ahoms, and therefore we may assume that they were faithful to the Ahom kings. But relations took a turn for the worse in the reign of Sudangpha. He was the first Ahom king to bring the seeds of Hinduism into the Ahom court.² This seems to have resulted in some change in the administration, followed by revolts. It is mentioned in the Ahom Buranji that from 1397, the year of the accession of Sudangpha; to 1404, for eight years, the people of Iton, Khamjang and Tipam, of which the two former were Nagas,³ did not pay their annual tributes.⁴ At last, with the intervention of the Nara King Chaopha Banak (or Surunpha), the Nagas submitted.⁵

In 1487, the Nagas of the Tangshu village revolted. They completely defeated the Ahom army on Banruk hill. The Banrukia Gohain and Parbatia Hazarika, along with one hundred and forty Ahom soldiers, were killed in this battle.⁶ It is mentioned in the Buranji that "Shushenpha could not defeat the Nagas but had to retreat" and after a few lines however the same Buranji again says that "a bloody battle was fought in which the Nagas were completely defeated. A large number of the Nagas were made captives and produced before the king."⁷ Evidently the former and the latter story do not agree. The subsequent history suggests that in fact the former is more accurate than the latter. In the following year, 1489, the king died and was succeeded by his son Suhenpha. In 1489, this king sent one Eomung to construct a fort at the village Tangshu.

¹ H. K. Barua, *Assam Buranji*, Gauhati, 1930, pp. 16-17.

² G. Barua, *Assam Buranji*, Calcutta, 1876, p. 91.

³ G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, pp. 45 and 54, and p. 51.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ N. Elias, *History of the Shans*, Calcutta, 1876, p. 45. (The Nara king mentioned in the Buranji is shown here as Chau-Hung-pha and his reign is put between the years 1381-1411).

⁶ G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, p. 52.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 29.

In 1490, war broke out between the Ahoms and the Kacharis.¹ No sooner was this war concluded than the Nagas renewed their hostilities and cut off the head of the Bargohain, Tyaokangbanrek, who was in command of the army. A new Bargohain, Nangaranga by name, was appointed in place of the deceased, and this commander completely defeated the Nagas and made captive the families of the Naga chiefs Tanshu, Nefera and Moupia, who were the leaders of the army.² In this reign, a Naga Garu by name was established as subordinate to the Ahom king, at a village near the Sessa river in the Ahom country.³

In 1504, the Itania Nagas revolted. King Suhummung sent Bargohain Nangaranga and Buragohain Khampeng, who marched with a big army against the Nagas and defeated them. The Itanias made peace with the Ahoms by giving four elephants and a girl as presents.⁴

The later history will reveal that several Naga girls were taken by the Ahoms as tokens of good relations. One of the main trade relations of the Nagas with the Ahoms was in exporting salt from the Naga hills.⁵ So it appears that, in time of peace, there were social unity and economical coherence between the Nagas and the Ahoms. Mills has observed that "for long the Aos had maintained friendly relations with the Ahom Rajas and several villages received grants of land in the plains in exchange for presents and promises to refrain from raiding."⁶

An interesting event in the Naga history took place in the early part of the sixteenth century. A chief from a Naga village was appointed to the post of Barpatragohain, one of the three highest

¹ K. N. Tamuli Phukan, *Assam Buranji*, Calcutta, 1906, pp. 17-18.

² G. Barua, *Assam Buranji*, Calcutta, 1876, p. 92.

³ G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, p. 35.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 54.

⁵ *An Officer of the East India Company, A Sketch of Assam*, London, 1847 p. 158.

⁶ J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, London, 1926, p. 11.

officers of the Ahom administration. It is mentioned in the Purani Assam Buranji that in the absence of the descendants of the king, the succession should take place from the Barpatra family.¹ Hali Ram Dhekial Phukan says that, among the three highest dignitaries in the administration of Assam, the Barpatra Gohain had more power than the other two ; his power, prestige and dignity were only second to those of the king.²

It is mentioned in the Ahom Buranji that "the king Suhumpha made one Kanseng, Barpatra Gohain, bringing him from the hill Daichila. He also gave the Barpatra ten Hatimorias from the Lukkhakhun family. He also made two persons of the Taikalangia Ahom families Hatimorias.³ Gunabharam, Kasinath and Haliram say that the mother of Kanseng Barpatra Gohain was an Ahom queen and write a story describing how she was given to a Naga youth. (See chapter IV on the Ahoms, pp. 85.86). But the Ahom, Dcodhai and Assam Buranji do not mention the story at all. Moreover the above Buranjists are not unanimous in describing the story. Kasinath and Gunabharam say that the incident took place in the reign of Supimpha,⁴ while Hali Ram says it occurred in the reign of Subbinpha and the contents of the story are different from those of the above.⁵ Moreover the story given in the Purani Assam Buranji is even more confusing. Two distinct stories are given ; the first mentions that the events took place in the reign of king Sukapha ; the second states that they occurred in the reign of Suhummung and the contents do not tally with each other.⁶

Whoever may have been the mother of the Barpatra Gohain, it is evident that he was born and brought up at Daichila in the Naga hills. We have already quoted that ten Hatimoria Naga and two Taikalangia Ahom families, subjects to the Ahom king,

¹ H. C. Debgoswami, *Purani Assam Buranji*, Gauhati, 1922, p. 17.

² H. R. Dhekial Phukan, *Assam Buranji*, Calcutta, 1829, p. 50.

³ G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, p. 35. (Ten Hatimoria Naga families were given to Barpatra Gohain as Paiks (personal servants).

⁴ See the chapter on the Ahoms.

⁵ H. R. Dhekial Phukan, *Assam Buranji*, Calcutta, 1829, p. 49.

⁶ H. C. Debgoswami, *Purani Assam Buranji*, Gauhati, 1922, pp. 16-17 and 40-41.

were engaged to the Barpatra Gohain as paiks (soldiers or servants who give service for the land). It is mentioned in the Purani Assam Buranji that, in the battle against the Nagas in the reign of Suhummung, a chief Kanseng by name helped the Ahoms against the Nagas, when he was appointed as Barpatra Gohain. And henceforward the relatives and descendants of this family are called "Naga-Patra." It is thus evident that at least some of the powerful chiefs from Naga regions had friendly relations with the Ahoms. Kanseng was a great hero. In 1532, when Turbak, a Pathan general, attacked Assam, Kanseng was appointed the Commander of the Ahom army. He fought with the Muhammadan army, killed Turbak, and drove the Muslims away beyond the river Karatoya.²

In 1535, the Nagas of the villages Malan, Pankha, Khaokha, Lukna and Taru of the lower regions and Pahuk, Khamteng, Shiteng and Shireng of the higher regions united in a body and attacked the Khamjangia Gohain (the Ahom Governor), posted at Khamjang. Next the Nagas of Jakhang also joined the above group. Finally the Nagas of Mungjang also participated with them against the Ahoms. It is mentioned in the Buranji that, the expeditions against the Nagas having proved of fruitless, the Katakis (messenger) were sent by the Ahom king to induce the Nagas to come to terms. A treaty was concluded in which the Nagas are said to have presented one hundred methons (a species of wild cows) to the Ahom king.³

From the above and the later rebellions in the Naga land, it appears that the appointment of Kanseng, a Naga chief, in the post of Barpatra Gohain did not solve the Naga problem. If at least a section of the Nagas had been pleased the great majority of them were against the domination of the Ahoms. Later history will reveal that the pacification of the Nagas, though often attempted, was an ambition which never fully materialised.

¹ H. C. Debgoswami, *Purani Assam Buranji*, Gauhati, 1922, p. 41.

² G. Barua, *Assam Buranji*, Calcutta, 1876, p. 97.

³ G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, pp. 73-74.

In 1536, the Tablungia Nagas revolted. The Ahom army was garrisoned on the border of the Naga villages of Jaktung, Khangja and Namchang. But the Nagas of the villages Jakteng, Shangnan, Jenphan and Shanchai assembled together and entered the village of the Tablungia Nagas to fight the Ahom army encamped near by. The Ahoms were totally routed by the Nagas. The prince, Suklenmung, the commander of the Ahom army, along with three other leaders, and their troops, fled at night from their camps leaving four large guns to be captured by the Nagas. At last a treaty was concluded, when the Nagas returned the captured guns.¹

In 1549, there was a quarrel between the Nagas of the villages Banchang and Banpha, and the Banpha Nagas invited the Ahoms to help them to attack the Banchangia Nagas. The combined Banpha and Ahom army attacked the Banchangia Nagas, who were defeated. Chaokingpong, the leader of the Banchangia Nagas was captured. The Ahoms received twenty buffaloes, nine methons and a large coral as booties of the war.²

In 1555, the Hatikhokia Nagas revolted. A battallion of the Ahom army marched towards the spot and garrisoned a place called Namtit. Another rebellion of the Nagas took place at Iton, where a similar battallion of the Ahom army was sent. Here the Hatikhokia Nagas were defeated and fled to Khamteng via Papuk, and one hundred of their methons were captured by the Ahoms. In the meantime the Nagas of the villages Iton, Papuk and Khamteng united in a group and attacked Bar-gohain Thaomunglung, who was the commander of the Ahom army. The whole army of the Bargohain having been killed, he himself was at last made a captive in the hands of the Nagas. Next in another engagement on Tadaibungmung hill, the Nagas were defeated and in a treaty they released the Bargohain.³ It is noteworthy that the Bargohain was not beheaded in captivity. The Nagas in this region at present are by tradition head-hunters. It would seem in fact that at the time the

¹ G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, pp. 74-75.

² *Ibid.* p. 82.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 82-83.

custom was not prevalent among them. In later years an important leader of an enemy people would certainly be beheaded if he fell into their hands.

In 1563, when the Koches invaded the Ahom capital, the king Sukhampha took shelter in the Naga land and remained at Klangdoi hill for three months.¹ The reason for his taking shelter in the land of the belligerent Nagas may be that the Koches would have been disinclined to follow him into the Naga hills, firstly for fear of the fierce resistance of the Nagas and secondly on account of the difficulty found by the soldiers of the plain in fighting in the hilly regions.

It is mentioned in the Buranji that in 1564, a Naga² chief Lashaw by name revolted, when the officers of the Ahom king were sent to seize him.³ In 1571, two Naga leaders Pungbang and Pungkhru showed signs of revolt against the Ahom sovereignty.⁴ In 1573, there were uprisings in the villages of Itania and Kheram ; but all were suppressed and the wives and children of the Itania Nagas were taken as captives by the Ahoms.⁵

We find mention of further Naga and Ahom struggles in 1576, the last in the history of the sixteenth century. It is mentioned in the Buranji that in the above year a Naga chief attacked the Ahom territory, killed twenty-six soldiers in battle and occupied Ahom territory up to Longpong, where there were salt springs. Ultimately a treaty was concluded in which it was laid down that the Nagas could use these springs during the daytime and the Ahoms at night.⁶ From the conditions of the

¹ Ibid. p. 87.

² In fact the name is given as 'Naka.' 'As there is no Naka tribe in Assam we can take it as meaning Naga. The form may be due to a mistake in the transcription of the manuscript or in printing.

³ G. C. Barua, Ahom Buranji, Calcutta, 1930, p. 88.

⁴ Ibid. p. 91.

⁵ Ibid. p. 92.

⁶ H. R. Dhekial phukan, Assam Buranji, Calcutta, 1829, p. 55-56.

treaty, it seems that the Nagas were in the better position. The above Buranji mentions neither the name of the chief nor the name of the village of the Nagas. We know that in 1575, the Naras' invaded Ahom country and stopped at Khamjang. The Ahom king Sukhampha made friendship with the Naras by giving them one thousand gold mohurs. At the end of that year the Naras left Khamjang but stopped at Itan.² The above two villages Khamjang and Itan were both in the Naga region.³ The Buranjis do not record anything as to the relation between the Naras and the Nagas. But it seems that, as the Nagas had a history of continuous hatred of and disputes with the Ahoms, they must have co-operated with the Naras, when the latter stationed themselves in their land and prepared to invade the Ahom kingdom. So in 1576, the Nagas were in a good position to inflict a crushing defeat upon the Ahoms and as a result captured the Ahom territory up to Lonpong, where there were salt-springs. The Ahoms probably agreed to an unfavourable treaty because they apprehended aggression from the Naras, which actually took place next year in 1577.⁴

Our sources do not mention any further hostilities between the Ahoms and the Nagas up to the end of the sixteenth century. As we close our studies at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the history of the Nagas can stop here.

¹ The Buranji does not mention the name of the Nara King in whose reign this invasion took place. From the date it seems to have taken place in the reign of Chau-ka-pha II (1564-83), who was very powerful and challenged the supremacy of the then king of Pegu, who was liege lord over Nogaung, Monyin and Momeit at that time.

² G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, pp. 92-93.

³ See *Ante*, pp. 249-50.

⁴ G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, Calcutta, 1930, p. 93.

It is clear from our survey of the relations between the Ahoms and the Nagas that during our period though some Nagas cooperated with the Ahoms and no doubt gradually merged with them, Naga tribes as a whole were constantly hostile to the more powerful conquerors of the plains and waged almost continuous guerilla warfare against them. The treaties which were made from time to time, were never of long duration, and then as now the Naga's pride and staunch independence, though in some ways admirable, was a source of great trouble to the more civilized inhabitants of the region.

CONCLUSION

The Ahoms :

We opened our thesis in the year 1228, the year which saw the immigration of numerous people of the great Tai or Shan race from the Hukong valley, Upper Burma and Yunnan. One of their groups was led by Sukapha, who in the first half of the thirteenth century founded the Ahom kingdom in the Brahmaputra valley. He was succeeded by his son Suteupha in 1268, maintained his father's hold very cautiously in the face of occasional aggression from the neighbouring tribes. The Ahom kings held their little state with comparatively few changes until, in 1397, Sudangpha became king and ruled up to 1407. There were battle during his rule with the Tipamias, Chau-Hung-pha, the Nara king, Sukranka, the Kamata king, the Bengal Sultan, Ghiyas ud-din Azam Shah, and the Nagas. In this reign the seeds of Hinduism were sown in the Ahom kingdom. Sudangpha was the ablest of the Ahom kings among the successors of Sukapha before the Dihingia line. The rulers, uneventfully succeeding, governed throughout the fifteenth century until the reign of Suhummung in 1497. He finally conquered the Chutias and annexed their kingdom. He defeated the Kacharis and drove them from the Subansiri valley. He defeated and repulsed three Muhammadan invasions led by Bara Ujir, Luput and Turbak. He fought with Samlungpawmaing or Phuklaimung, the Nara king. He chastised the hostile Nagas and made feudatory the Koch and Manipuri kings. In 1539, he was succeeded by his son Suklenmung who defeated Nara Narayan, the Koch king. In 1552, Sukhampha came to the Ahom throne. He made a matrimonial alliance with Chau-Sui-kwei, the Nara king. He subdued the Bhuyans and the Nagas. He fought and ultimately succeeded in repulsing the Koches from the Ahom land. He defeated Chau-ka-pha, the Nara king. He entered into matrimonial relations with Raghudev, the Koch king of the eastern branch, and thence played an important role in the affairs of the eastern Koches against their rivals the western branch.

The history of the period under review saw a large influx of the Shan peoples into Assam and their ultimate adoption of Hinduism. Repeated Muslim invasions were sent to Kamata and Upper Assam from the west, but the Muslims could not permanently hold their sway over the land. Similarly the frequent Nara invasions from the east resulted in no territorial gain. A peculiar form of government was introduced by the Ahoms. There developed a unique style of wooden architecture. During the earlier part of our period the custom and the discretion of the judges were the criterion for justice, but Hindu law was generally followed after Hinduisation.

Kamrup :

The kingdom of Kamrup survived numerous Muslim invasions during our period, and three changes of dynasty. The reign of the Koch king Nara Narayan which began in 1540, was perhaps the most successful and prosperous period in the history of medieval Kamrup, but in 1581, Raghudev, the nephew of Nara Narayan, rebelled against him and as a result the country was divided into two. The extensive tract east of the river Sankosh was given to Raghudev as his share and he established his headquarters at Darrang. In 1584, Nara Narayan was succeeded by his son Lakshmi Narayan, who ruled the territory west of Sankosh from his capital at Coochbehar. The later history of the Koches is the narrative of mutual jealousy and rivalry between the two houses.

The period saw enormous changes in the political, social, cultural and religious aspects of the country. The people of Kamata under such rulers as Durlabh Narayan and Nara Narayan, became very powerful and prosperous. There was no power in eastern India to contest the Koch supremacy under Nara Narayan and his brother Sukladhvaj. A very powerful class of aristocracy, known as Bhuyans, evolved out of the soil of Kamata during this period. Though sometimes they were engaged in feuds and dissensions against both one another and the ruling king, they united together for the general cause. The scorched earth policy against invaders was known to the Kamata people. It was a period in which the creative genius of the Assamese people reached its climax. Under the influence of

scholars and poets like Hem Sarasvati, Kaviratna Sarasvati, Haribar Bipra, Purusottam Bidyavagish, Sridhar, Pandit Siddhantavagish and Ananta Kandali, the vernacular found its proper recognition as the literary medium, through which the weak and repressed intellect of Assam found its release. During this period the temples at Kamakhya and Hajo were reconstructed, beautiful cities, embankments and fortifications were built. Tanks were excavated and roads were constructed. So, as in military glory, the period was unparalleled in architectural activities. There were hospitals, veterinary hospitals and houses for the blind, lame and old.¹ In the field of religion, the period had a unique position. The debased forms of later Buddhism known as the Vajrayana and Sahajia were at first succeeded by Saktism. By far the most important and interesting event of the period was the Vaisnava reformation. The period witnessed an efflorescence of the Assamese mind, symbolised by Sri Sankardev, by whose message of love and forgiveness the whole of eastern India was carried off its feet. The Assamese mind burst its bonds and found its voice in the sweet lyricism of the cult of Bhakti, in the emotional intensity of a resurgent Vaisnavism. In verse and song, social toleration and religious fervour were propagated, and the exuberance of the religious life of Assam long continued unabated through the earnestness of Madhava dev, Ram Charan Thakur and others.

The Religious Concept of Sri Sankardev² :

The Vaisnavism is a very wide subject. Here an attempt has been made to present a brief account of the various aspects of Assam Vaisnavism pari passu the cult of Vaisnavism as prevalent in the rest of India. The cultural life of Assam in the sixteenth century was as rich and varied if not more as that of any other part of India and the credit for this cultural renaissance in Assam is entirely due to the personality and genius of Sri Sankardev.

¹ J. H. Ryley, Ralph Fitch, London, 1899, pp. 111-113.

² See Acharyya, N. N., Religious Concept of Sankardev, Proceedings of Indian History Congress, Gauhati Session, 1959, pp. 477-82.

The origins of Vaisnavism are lost in obscurity but it is clear that the Vaisnavism of history is a gradual development of the Aryan Vedic cult. The germs of this cult are found in Vedic hymns and the Upanishads. The doctrine of Bhakti or single-minded devotion to God is clearly evident in the later Brahminical literatures. This is the doctrine of grace. The cult of Bhakti blossoms forth fully in the Epics and later devotional literatures.

The Vaisnavism is concerned with faith in, and devotional worship of Vishnu. The conception of divinity culminates in his concept of Vishnu in as much as Vishnu represents in the highest degree all that is majestic, sublime and blissful. This conception of Vishnu also tallies with the derivative meaning of the word. The root word of Vishnu is Vis (to pervade). It means the all pervading one. Vaisnavism is not a particular system of thought, but a commonwealth of systems. In its all-comprehensive aspect it represents a synthetic culture that includes what may be variously called Bhakti cult, Ekasana dharma, Parama dharma, Mahapurushia dharma and other paths leading more or less to the same goal. It is not the product of the spiritual genius of any single individual, however great he may be. Under the inspiration of the divine cosmic Principle immanent in all, countless prophets, saints, and seers have flourished from time to time since remote antiquity, all helping the eternal stream of spiritual life in its ceaseless flow through countless tributaries towards the ocean of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. It recognises all prophets and divine personalities as different embodiments of the same principle that stands at the back of them and all inspires them all. It believes in the potential divinity of all souls and encourages them to follow their own paths according to their spiritual capacity and tendencies. It urges the followers of all religious and philosophical systems to preserve the distinctive features and to assimilate the truths of others as much as possible.

The Saktism and the Tantriksm mingled with pseudo-Buddhistic culture were the predominating religion of ancient Kamarupa. Kamakhya was the centre of Tantrik culture and its fame spread throughout India. At that time study of religion was confined to the erudite section of the people, i. e., the Brahmins. The Neo-Vaisnavism as propounded by Sankaradeva differed a good deal from the earlier system based on Tantrikism.

Sankardev laid the foundation of a new faith in Assam. The modern phase of the faith in this region begins with the birth of Mahapurishya dharma propounded by Sankardev. The influence of the new religion percolated to the deepest strata of the political, social, cultural and religious life of the country. This synchronises with the all-India religious movement of the time. At the time of the advent of Sankardev the whole of Assam was divided among the Bhuyans, Ahoms, Koches, Kacharis, Jayantias, Chutias and Nagas. The Bhuyan aristocracy was engaged in feuds and dissensions against one another and against the ruling king. The period saw a large influx of the Shan peoples into Assam. Though subsequently these were absorbed by the Hindu culture of Assam, they retained many of their own customs and habits at the time. There were repeated Muslim invasions from Bengal which proved disastrous to the culture and progress of Assam. Similarly the frequent Nara invasions from Upper Burma retarded the growth of all-round prosperity of this region. The influence of Tantrikism was felt in the royal courts and human sacrifices were offered to the tutelary Goddess Kesai Khati (eater of raw meat) of Sadia. This Goddess had her votaries among all the hill tribes of the vicinity and the Hindu population of some other parts of Assam.

At such a critical juncture of Assam's history Sankardev came as a deliverer. It was he who first brought the message of Bhakti cult to the common people in a medium which was their mother tongue. The Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads and other ancient Sastras were all written in Sanskrit which was not known to the majority of the inhabitants. Sankardev realised the evil consequences of the caste rules amongst the Hindus and thus denounced the caste structure of the society. He showed that Bhakti or devotion is the means for attainment of blissful knowledge. He taught the worship of Krishna centering which the Assamese Bhakti cult developed. Its basis was the relation between Krishna the worshipped object and the Bhakta the worshipping subject. The means through which the approach should be made was the Upasana or Dhyana (contemplation). He preached that servitude to the Lord Krishna was sine qua non in matters of realisation of the highest person Krishna. Thus Sri Sankaradeva taught the worship of Krishna but at the same time he hastened to condemn the idolatry and sacrificial pic-

ty practiced at the time. He showed that the duty of man is to effect a transformation in his own nature. It is to emerge from unrest to serenity, from a human beast to a divine power. He refused to be carried away by the traditional ritualism and upheld the super-excellence of the religion of the Bhagavata and the chanting of the name of the Supreme Lord. He laid emphasis on the *Dasyabhava* or the relation existing between the master and the servant. The blissful *Ananda Vrahma* was the attribute of the great *Purusha-Brahman* and the *Prakriti* was subservient to Him. Sankardev's system was based on the complete surrender to the one and is known as the *Ekasarana*. This was a spirit of sincere devotion developed to a state of personal relationship between the object of worship and the worshipping subject.

Sankardev's religion is based upon a philosophic conception which recognised the value of both the visible and invisible aspect of the universe both the outer form and the inner spirit. He preached the total renunciation of ritualism and worship and laid entire emphasis on morality and spiritual discipline. He thinks that man fulfils himself not by seeking the spirit alone but by a realisation of the values of earthly and spiritual good. According to him the infusion of life into the universal truths and its presentation in the most attractive form is a far greater truth than the spiritual enlightenment itself. Sankardev tried to lead men to the top-most heights of paradise through his love for mankind.

Most of the followers of Vaisnavism in southern India worship Sita and Ram, Radha and Krishna as a pair, but Vaisnavism in Assam does not entertain such worship of pair with the female sex. Like Ramanuja, Sankardev also propagated qualified Monism (*Visistadvaitavad*) in which Krishna is the supreme being, the primal cause of the universe in the form of Narayan and it differs from the *Mayabad* as expounded by Sankaracharya. The latter showed that the universe is identical with the deity. Between the human soul and the great being there is *Maya* in the form of phenomenal world. Attainment of true knowledge is a stage in which the human soul merges with the great being and all that creates the difference ceases to exist. *Dvaitavad* or Dualism promulgates that God and man are eter-

nally different. It is God who has the ultimate authority to bestow mercy, help and compassionate grace on man. The Dvaitadvaitavad of chaitanya propagates Dualism in religious speculation but stresses more the devotional side. In it the devotee forgets his very existence. His senses make him aware of the presence of the Great one. His Non-dualism within Dualism is only a refined form of Dualism in the highest stage of devotion. Chaitanya advocated practice of asceticism and control of passions. He preached abstinence and wished men to avoid rich meals and fine apparel. He did not commend too much study. Some of his tenets in regard to action and knowledge are opposed to certain principles of Bhakti. Chaitanya perceived that passions and emotions were the great atom-powers of the soul. God has given these to men for some definite purpose. The world is not to be renounced, nor are the ties that bind men to it to be given up. These ties are sacred and if properly understood, they lead us to the realisation of permanent bliss. The fundamental tenets of the qualified Monism of Sankardev are (i) the knowledge of the supreme Reality conceived as Narayana, (ii) Surrender to the supreme in the form of Srikrishana, (iii) Company of good souls, Satsanga of the supreme being. Sankardev taught that the Niskam Bhakti is the highest mode of propitiating the object of devotion. In the temple of the Assamese vaisnavas a sacred book specially the Bhagavata Puran is universally placed on the altar like the Granth Saheb in the Sikh temples, to the exclusion of all idols whatsoever. The Kevaliyas of Assam vaisnavism are celibates like the kevalins, a class of Bhaktas grew under the fostering care of Ramanuja in the Deccan.

Sankaradeva was firmly convinced that all religions are true that every doctrinal system represents a true path towards divinity. He had studied the tenets of the different religions and observed that all religions lead to the same goal. The great system of thought known as Dualism, Qualified non-dualism and absolute non-dualism sought to represent three states in man's progress toward the ultimate reality. They were not contradictory but complementary and suited to different temperaments. For the ordinary man with a strong attachment to the senses, a dualistic form of religion, prescribing a certain amount of material support such as music and other symbols, is useful. A man who realises

God transcends the idea of worldly duties, but the ordinary people must perform their duties striving to remain unaltered and to surrender the results to God. The mind can comprehend and describe the range of thought and experience up to the Visistadvaita and no further. The Advaita, the last words in spiritual experience is something to be felt in Samadhi as it transcends mind and speech. From the highest stand point the Absolute and its manifestaions are equally real—the Lord's name. His abode, and the Lord himself, are of the same spiritual essence. Everything is spirit, the difference being only in form.

Sankardev founded many Satras (monasteries) and Namghars (chanting house) for maintaining the discipline and standard of his devotees. In these centres the sweet tuned kirtans, reading of the Vaisanava puthis and other regular programmes of these institutions brought the Bhakti cult daily to the door of the tiniest hamlet. The media of both music and study were powerfully employed to win the people to the teachings of the Bhagavata and through various entertaining stories and anecdotes leading to the love and devotion for the supreme God. The ultimate aim was to implant a sense of self-surrender to the Almighty among the minds of the people who attended his congregations or thronged the Namghars in the villages. The Satra institutions established by the Neo-vaisnavite cult give an expression to the social organisations of Assam. In these institutions people of all classes and castes whether devotees, disciples, followers or sympathisers meet together and perform all kind of works, social, moral and religious. These institutions had perfect control on social matter and gave a proper direction to cultural life. In spiritual order no distinction of caste was recognised. In a gathering of worshippers people of all ranks and orders had the same privilege and equal status. Anybody and evreybody could read the sacred books and chant the hymns of God. All devotees irrespective of caste and creed enjoyed the privilege of distributing the offerings (Naivedya) to Vishnu. The formalities prescribed for the purpose were equally open to and observed by all classes of people. By introducing such systems all the evils and abuses existing in the society were removed. The door of the temple was kept open to all classes of people.

The Satras of Sankardev have done much in determining the march of national progress along the direction of Ahimsa and democracy and to the end that the village shall be the foundation of the new social order of culture and thought. It is these small settlements wherein the philosophy of plain living and high thinking is inculcated by the common folk that all great cults have received their nourishment and it is from them as centres of radiation that they are broadcast. The Satras in effect are the Seminaries like the Buddhist Viharas meant to instruct and discipline the pupils seeking siksha at them. This is an ancient institution which had been revived by Sankardev. These are the centres of intellectual enlightenment, spiritual culture, national service and social reconstruction. The Satras supply ample scope for the right development of life with all due restraints, to the youths in the formative period of their lives.

Sankardev was a good writer. His writing consist of the Bhagavat Puran, the Ramayana, Bhakti-Pradipa and Bhakti Ratnakar etc., some more than twenty books. He introduced dramas and prose in Assamese language. These dramas which are known as Ankia Nats are the first of their kind in any vernacular literature of India. In music too Sankardeva was a pioneer. He introduced Bargeets, and devotional lyrics, blending to religious passions and deep melodies. Thus Assamese drama, prose and music occupy the first among the vernacular literature of India. The whole Vaisnava literature of Assam rich in its great Kirtan dramas and Bargeets is a living testimony to the glory of the Bardoa Bhuyan, a poor vaisnava in preference but the prince of princes in the domain of spirituality. Thus to-day in Assam the ploughman forgets his bullock, the fisherman his net and the peasant woman forgets her husking, as a song of Sankardev is sung by a passerby making all hearts leap forth in joy and adoration.

Sankardev is the upholder of Samyavada, the doctrine of equality. His religion is based on the principles of eternity and perpetuality, an ideal of all time. The subject matter of Sankardeva's literature is a combination of religious philosophy and human psychology. Nature with all her charms and beauties is depicted in his writings showing mutual affinity and relation between the external aspects of Nature and human passions,

emotions and conceptions. The Aryan culture and mysticism subsisting between God and man are extolled in his works. His literature is a combination of profundity of thought and clarity of expression. The cult of Bhagavata Dharma with the conception of oneness of God has been revealed in his works in the form of Mahapurushiya Dharma. Through reformation and organisation of the society and moral upliftment of Assam has been achieved through the manifold activities pursued in the Sastras. The social order and the tone established by his influence is traditionally coming down from generation to generation. In his teachings we find the essence of all religions. The principles of Ahimsa now universally acknowledged as the best form of faith is deeply rooted in the teachings of Sankardev. The broadness of his teachings makes a common platform for all humanity. Thus in the spiritual field equality of men—a desideratum long over-due took place ushering a new era of peace and progress in human conduct.

Sri Sankardev was a man of rich and varied experience. He travelled widely all over the Northern and Central parts of India gathering first hand knowledge of manners and customs of different places and beliefs and faiths of different persons. Finally he synthesised his ideas derived from books and men, into the form of an integrated philosophy known as Eksaraniya Dharma. The more we study his works and consider its impact on the life and culture of this easternmost State of India the more we are amazed at the range and extent of magnetism of personality, artistic felicity and constructive power. He was a nation builder, a prolific and renowned author, a great philosopher, a pioneering reformer, a true patriot and a real humanist all rolled in one.

The Kacharis :

By the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Kacharis became powerful over the region from the eastern border of Kamrup to the valley of Dhansiri and North Cachar hills. But towards the end of this century, the outlying Kachari territory east of the Dikhu river was ceded to the Ahoms and, during the whole fourteenth century, that river served as boundary between the two kingdoms. But the sixteenth century saw a

considerable growth of Ahom power, and the Kacharis were driven from their capital. When we leave them, however, they are once more gaining somewhat in strength under Yasa Narayan.

The Kacharis are among the earliest peoples of Assam and their mongolian features give the idea of their Sino-Tibetan origin. They are the remnants of the prehistoric Bodo supremacy in Eastern India. The growing power of the Ahoms in the east and the Koches on the west were an inevitable menace to the Kacharis. By far the greatest and most important feature of the medieval Kachari culture is to be found in the varied architecture of the period. The ruins of Dimapur and Maibang, bear testimony of their attainments in sculpture, architecture and engineering.

The Jayantias :

The kingdom of Jayantia is of remote antiquity. Its early history is shrouded in mystery. But during the medieval period, the first mention of this kingdom is found in the Vangsavalis of the Koch kings in the middle of the sixteenth century. Nara Narayan, the Koch king, invaded the Jayantia kingdom. Jayantia Buranji mentions the names of Jayantia kings of a remote period, but before the reign of Dhanmanik, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the account is too meagre to construct a political history.

The language of the Jayantia is one of the surviving remnants of the Mon-khmer speech in present India. They have matriarchal institutions and the property descends through the females. The chief of the state is succeeded not by his son but by his sister's son. The most interesting and decisive feature of their culture is the erection of monoliths in memory of the dead. They have some peculiar tastes and observances of divine beliefs. The adoption of Hinduism here is of great antiquity, but social custom is by no means wholly in keeping with the Sastras, even today. The kings and nobles are followers of the Sakta sect and observe rigidly the injunctions of the Sastras.

The Chutias :

The kingdom of Chutia had an early origin. It preserves a long list of kings from the middle of the seventh century A. D. But reference to them is actually made first in the thirteenth century. Throughout our period the Chutias held their own with difficulty against the Ahoms until, in 1523, the last king Dhir Narayan was totally defeated and he and his son or son-in-law were killed in the battlefield. The Ahom king Suhummung annexed the Chutia country to his own and appointed a viceroy there.

The Chutias are another surviving remnant of the ancient Bodo inhabitants of Assam. A crude form of Hinduism became the state religion at a very early time and the Caste System was in existence during our period. The influence of a Tantrik form of Saktism was felt in the royal court, and human sacrifices of criminals were offered to the tutelary goddess Kesai Khati (Eater of Raw Meat), a deity who was respected by and had her votaries among all the hill tribes in the vicinity and the Hindu population of the other part of Assam. Pilgrims from the regions far more remote i. e. China and Tibet brought their offerings as a token of their belief and regard for Tantrikism.¹

The Nagas :

The Nagas, who met the invading Ahoms on their way to Assam, were never thoroughly subdued. Throughout our period we read of punitive expeditions against them on the one hand and fierce raids by these tribesmen into Ahom territory on the other. Though some Nagas cooperated with the Ahoms, the Naga tribes as a whole were constantly hostile to the people of the plains and waged almost continuous guerilla warfare against them.

An outline grammar of the Deori-chutya language, W. B. Brown (Appendix), Shillong, 1895, p. 77.

The period we have covered was one of great importance in the history of Assam. Until its beginning we have no records of any kingdom other than that of Kamrup, and we must assume that civilization had hardly penetrated beyond the strip of territory along the banks of the Brahmaputra which formed the kernel of the Hindu kingdom of Kamarupa. With the coming of the Ahoms new blood was brought into the land, which fertilized its culture, and simultaneously brahmins and other refugees, fleeing from the Muslim invaders of the Ganges valley, brought further racial elements into Assam. The various peoples whose history we have discussed fiercely resisted Muslim attacks from Bengal, and thus provided an outpost of Hindu rule in Eastern India. The gradual growth of orthodox Hinduism in the region throughout our period is noticeable from many passing references in the Buranjis. When our period began only the region of Kamrup was strongly influenced by Brahminic culture. At its end, Hinduism is everywhere, often indeed in a blood-thirsty and corrupt form, but rapidly changing as a result of the work of Vaisnavite reformers.

Politically the period is broadly characterised by the gradual growth of the Ahoms, though the Koch kingdom still remained as a powerful rival throughout most of our period. The growth of the Ahoms provided a power strong enough to repel the Mughal invaders of the seventeenth century, and ultimately, in the eighteenth century, to gain overlordship of the whole of Assam.

Though they are not even now a unitary people, the tribes and castes of Assam have today generally a common sense of unity in diversity within the framework of the wider Hindu culture of India. In our study of the political history of medieval Assam we have tried to show some of the means whereby this unity came about.

APPENDIX "G"

EVOLUTION OF ASSAM THROUGH THE AGES

Assam, Situated on the northeastern frontier of India, was a large and powerful kingdom through the ages. Its geographical limit varied from time to time. In connection with the study of present day readjustment of the boundary of Assam, it may be worthwhile to enquire into its genesis.

Assam had different names in different periods of her history. From the beginning of the Rig Vedic age the kingdom was known as Pragjyotisha which means the seat of learning in Astronomy. This learning was connected with the Sakti worship of Kama-khya and Siva worship of Umananda of pre-Aryan origin. The Kingdom came to be known as Kamarupa during the later Vedic period. This was based on the legend that Kamadeva, the Indian Cupid, having been destroyed by Siva, regained life in this country. In the famous Prasasti of Samudragupta it is mentioned that Kamrupa was the frontier kingdom of India. Kalidasa mentioned Kamarupa and Pragjyotisha as names of the same kingdom. In the thirteenth century when the Shans conquered Assam, the word Assam or Assam first applied to the people and subsequently to the country they conquered.

The land of Assam has emerged as a result of long courses of geological evolution. As a whole it was formed not in single jolt but rather in parts and by stages. Some of its original parts were the oldest of the earth. Geological researches show that there was Eur-Asiatic ocean (Tethys) stretching from central Europe to Burma through Asia-Minor, Northern India and Assam. Next in the age of mountain-building, the Alps, the Carpathians, the hills of Persia and the hills of Assam emerged. Assam as a geographical entity has a long and continuous history. The animal world took a long course to emerge in evolution. Evolution of man in Assam was followed by that of a variety of racial types.

In the Palaeolithic ages the civilisation of Assam was based on hunting. The celts used by this people had been found in several places of Assam. The inhabitants who formed this

civilisation were of the Austric stock. They were the Pre-Dravidian aborigines and are at present represented by the Syntengs and Khasis, the Monkhmer elements of Assam. Philological and Ethnographical studies show that during this age, Assam exercised considerable influence over northern, southern and further India. The erection of monoliths, by the Khasis and Syntengs of Assam represents a specialised form of phallic ancestor cult which was widely prevalent among the earlier Mongolians of South-East Asia.

In the Chalcolithic age, Agricultural civilisation began in the Brahmaputra valley which was noted for its alluvial soil most suitable for rich agriculture. The people who formed this civilisation were a cultured race and supplanted the Austriacs. At this period the influence of the civilisation of Assam was felt in various eastern countries like Burma, China, Indo-China and Siam. Ghataka, a pre-Aryan king of Assam had exercised power over various Kirata countries of eastern Asia.

The Aryans entered Assam in the early part of the Rig-Vedic age. The location of Parasuramkunda in the eastern-most corner of Assam and the hermitage of Basistha at a distance of seven miles from Gauhati prove that the aryanisation of the whole of Assam was completed when many other parts of India were not aryanised. Parasuram and Basistha were the pious sages of the early Vedic age. They had made large contributions to the culture and informs us that the ancient Kamarupa kings were very powerful. Naraka who was brought up in the court of Videha was influenced much with Aryan culture, extended the western boundary of Kamarupa up to Videha. It is mentioned in the Ramayana that the boundary of Pragjyotisha touched the sea and it was a hilly country. The great Epic gives descriptions of the monuments of ancient Assam which were really unique in form, ideal and craftsmanship. The kingdom of Assam under Naraka stretched to the Himalayas in the north, the Bay of Bengal in the south and kingdom of Mithila in the west. The capital was at Gauhati which stood at the centre.

Bhagadatta extended the boundary of Assam in the east and ruled over Tibet, Bhutan and Burma besides the territories ruled by Naraka. At the time of Bhagadatta, Pragjyotisha reached to

its pinnacle of glory. The soldiers from Burma and China fought in the Kurukshetra war under Bhagadatta's banner. This king had a pleasure seat in the city of modern Rangpur which was at the centre of his kingdom. Under Bhagadatta Assam became a country of heterogeneous population consisting of the Austrics, Dravidians, Aryans and Mongolians.

From the early part of the later Vedic age down to the age of the Mahajanapadas, the kingdom of Kamarupa was one of the powerful countries of Northern India. The history of Magadhan ascendancy at the cost of the neighbouring countries began from the sixth century B. C. when Kamarupa experienced encroachments upon her borders. Magadha gradually extended towards the east and ultimately at the time of the Nandas and Mauryas absorbed western Kamarupa. The first epigraphic record which refers to Kamarupa is the famous 'Allahabad Prasasti' of Samudragupta. In this Inscription Kamarupa is referred to as a frontier kingdom along with Samatata, Davaka, Nepal, and Katripura. So it appears that at the time of Samudragupta, Kamarupa regained her lost position. Pushyavarman, the contemporary Kamarupa king fought with Samudragupta and acknowledged the supremacy of the great Gupta Emperor. As a result the tract of territory between the rivers Kausika and Tista to the south of the district of Jalpaiguri was made Pundravardhanabhukti.

Yuan Chwang informs that a series of hills that reached the confines of China formed the eastern boundary of contemporary Assam. The Chinese Pilgrim visited Kamarupa at the reign of Bhaskaravarman who was a very powerful king. Under Bhaskara the western limit of Kamarupa included the eastern part of Magadha, Pundravardhana and Karnasubarna, which touched the sea. The southern sea route from Tamralipti was controlled by Bhaskaravarman. According to the Kalika Puran the shrine of Kamakhya stands at the centre of the kingdom which stretched on all sides for one hundred yojanas. According to the Yogini Tantra, the eastern boundary of Kamarupa was the Dikhoo river, the river Karatoya flowed on the west, mount Kunjagiri stood on the east, and the southern boundary

went upto the rivers Lakshya and the Brahamaputra. So we see that even at a later period Assam included northern and eastern Bengal, part of Bhutan, the Khasi and Garo hills and the northern half of the district of Sylhet besides the Brahma-putra valley. Thus it appears that Pragjyotisha or ancient Kamarupa was a powerful and a much larger kingdom than most of the other kingdoms mentioned in the Mahabharata and most of the Sixteen Mahajanapadas existing at the time of the rise of Buddhism.

Minhaj-us-siraj in his 'Tabakat-i-Nasiri' gives us the boundary of medieval Assam. It is mentioned that by the beginning of the thirteenth century, the river Bagmati (Karatoya) formed the western frontier of a state of considerable power and extent, under a monarch styled Kamesvar. The eastern boundary of the kingdom was the modern districts of Nowgong and Darrang. On the east of it there was the valley of the Brahmputra. At that time it was divided into several petty principalities. A line of Chutia kings were holding the region north of the Brahma-putra and the east of Subansiri and Disang. The tract south and south-east of it was possessed by several petty Bodo tribes. Further west there was the kingdom of the Kacharis, stretching south of the Brahmputra across the Nowgong district. West of the Kacharis and the Chutias, there were the domains of a number of Bhuyans covering both the banks of the Brahmputra. They were the heads of different tribes by which the valley was then peopled. Some of them were ambitious and they conquered and absorbed the adjoining territories and the kingdoms thus formed continued to exist until they crumbled down owing to the weakness of their successors. The borders of the kingdoms of the Chutias and the Kacharis were occupied by some of the hill tribes, the Singphos and the Nagas.

In the thirteenth century, the Ahoms, an off-shoot of the great Shan race entered Assam through the North-Eastern boundary. They followed the course of the Lohit and the eastern tributaries of the Brahmputra and reached to its valley after crossing the Patkai. They first fought with the indigenous people of the region who were divided into small principalities, and were not in a position to resist the advance of the powerful invaders. By the fifteenth century the Ahoms consolidated their power in Upper

Assam. Sections of the Nagas and the Kacharis were brought under their domination. But real Ahom expansion and conquest began from the sixteenth century, when the Ahom king Suhummung, the Dihingia Raja, annexed the kingdom of the Chutias centering round their capital at Sadiya. The same king drove the Kacharis from their stronghold at Dimapur. The Bhuyan chieftains who had been ruling in the north bank of the Brahmaputra were brought under Ahom control. The Ahom history of the seventeenth century was mainly the history of Ahom-Mughal conflicts arose because of the ambitions of the Mughals to extend their territories further to the east, the intervention of the Ahoms in the affairs of the rival princes of Coochbehar who possessed a considerable portion of Bengal besides western part of Assam and the violation by the Ahoms of the terms of the treaties entered into by them with the Mughals. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the Ahom king Rudra Singha, a man of great ability and ambition, organised a confederacy of the Rajas of Eastern India with a view to oust the Mughals. After this king, the history of the Ahoms is one of internal strifes and dissensions, downfall and disintegration. In 1817, the Burmese invaded the country and, in 1922, achieved complete domination of Assam. But in 1824, the British entered Assam and expelled the Burmese from their commanding position. By the treaty of Yandabu, signed in 1826, Assam passed under the control of East India Company.

APPENDIX "H"

SRIMANTA SANKARDEV

Sankardev was the founder of Neo-Vaisnavism in Assam. He was a great reformer and a nation-builder. He was a man of great personality with child-like simplicity. All peoples in Assam look upon him as an incarnation of God Vishnu. His message to the people was ; 'Lay your love at the feet of Hari, chant the name of Hari only and give up all the rest '

In A. D. 1449, Sankardev was born at Bardowa in the modern district of Nowgong. His father's name was Kusumbar Bhuyan. The childhood of Sankardev was full of miracles. He was very strong and handsome. He possessed supernatural powers. He fought with a wild bull holding it by ears and horns. He swam across the river Brahmaputra in the rainy season. He could chase and catch wild deer with his bare hands.

In study as well as in sports Sankardev out-classed all the brahmin and non-brahmin boys of his age. He was admitted into the school conducted by the great scholar Madhava Kandali. His quick memory and sharp intellect made a him profound scholar within a very short time. He mastered himself over all the available branches of Sanskrit study. At the age of twenty-three Sankardev married and settled down to domestic life. A daughter, Manu, was born to him and when she attained puberty, he gave her in marriage to a person named Hari.

At this stage, the wife of Sankardev died. This unhappy incident brought a turning point to his career. He became a monk and practised Yoga. Within a very short time he acquired all the mysteries of Yoga Vidya. By nature, he was religious and thoughtful. This inborn tendency led him to study religious scriptures such as the Purans, the Geeta, the Vedas, the Vedantas and the like. The more he studied the Sastras and thought over them, the more he realised of true religion, After an

earnest devotion and deep meditation he realised the true sense of the Bhakti cult.

Sankardev now felt inclined to renounce the world and at the age of thirty-four, he visited various sacred places of India. These were Gaya, Puri, Brindavan, Mathura, Kasi, Dwaraka, Prayag, Setuvandha Rameswar, Baraha Kunda, Kurukshetra, Ayodhya, Badrikasram and so on. During his long pilgrimage or twelve years, Sankardev met the well-known Saint Kavir, with whom he made friendship. At the end of his travels he associated himself with many learned scholars and religious teachers. He returned home having been convinced that in order to elevate oneself spiritually one need not renounce the world. As a matter of fact he himself remarried on his return and began to preach his tenet which was derived from the teachings of the Geeta and the Bhagavata. Sankardev died in A. D. 1568 at the age of one hundred and twenty.

The period from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century was the period of world-wide reformation. In Europe Martin Luther led the reformatory movement and founded the Protestantism. In India four religious reformers took birth. They were Hari Vyas in Nepal, Ramananda in Orissa, Chaitanyadev in Bengal and Sankardev in Assam.

The religion of Sankardev was based on democratic principles and tolerant spirits. He kept no distinctions between caste and creed, between the rich and the poor, and between the high and the low. It was for this reason, Mahatma Gandhi remarked and said 'Assam indeed is fortunate, for Sankardev has, five centuries back, given to Assamese people an ideal which is also my ideal of Ram-Rajya.' Now we find some of the ideals of Sankardev in the teachings of Acharya Binova Bhawe.

Sankardev was a man of versatile genius. Through the Satras and the Namghais, he brought about a thorough change in the set up of society by removing untouchability and other restrictions. His teachings were full of morals and ideals. These are 'Atmavat Sarvabhuteshu' 'Ahimsa Parama Dharma', 'Vahujanahitaya' and so on. He was a profound scholar, a

famous author, a renowned philosopher, a pioneering reformer, a well-ordered social organiser, an artist of high order, a true nation-builder, a real patriot and a great humanist.

Thus Srimanta Sankardev has given to Assam a new age, a new life, a new culture and a new state. The rulers and the administrators have come and gone, their kingdoms and administrations perished in dust but the command and respects for the teachings of Sankardev last for all time to come.

APPENDIX "I"

A considerable number of scholars have now interested themselves in historical investigation and they have produced works which throw light on different aspects of Assam's history and culture. Mention may be made of the theses on Assam subjects which have won for their writers the Doctorate and other higher degrees of Universities.

1. Dr. Suryya Kumar Bhuyan, Ph. D. (Lond), *Anglo-Assamese Relations, 1771-1826*. D. Lit. (Lond).
2. Dr. Banikanta Kakati, Ph. D. (Cal), *Assamese : Its Formation and Development*.
3. Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua, Ph. D. (Lond), *A Cultural History of Assam*.
4. Dr. Bhupendra Narayan Chaudhury, Ph. D. (Lond), *British Rule in Assam 1845-1858*.
5. Sri Hara Mohon Das, Master of Theology, Institute of Oriental Philosophy, Vrindaban, Namaghosha.
6. Professor Madhab Chandra Goswami, M. Lit. (Camb), *The Mongoloids and their contribution to the growth of Assamese Culture*.
7. Dr. V. Venkata Rao, D. Lit (Alla), *Hundred years Local Self-Government in Assam*.
8. Dr. Anil Chandra Banerjee, Ph. D. (Cal), *The Eastern Frontier of British India*.
9. Dr. Aswini Kumar Barkakati, Ph. D. (Lond), *Local Self-Government in Assam*.
10. Dr. Heramba Kanta Barpujari, Ph. D. (Lond), *British Administration in Assam, 1826-1845*.
11. Dr. Sudhindra Nath Bhattacharyya, Ph. D. (Cal), *A History of Mughal North-East Frontier Policy*.
12. Dr. Pratap Chandra Choudhury, Ph. D. (London), *The History and Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A. D.*
13. Dr. Hari Prasanna Das, Ph. D. (Lond), *Forests in Assam : A Study in Economic Geography*.
14. Dr. Bhuban Mohan Das, D. Phil. (Cal), *Somatic Variability among some population of South Goalpara, Assam*.
15. Dr. Prafulladatta Goswami, D. Phil. (Gau), *Folk-literature of Assam : Ballads and Marchen*.

16. Dr. Prabhas Chandra Goswami, Ph. D. (Lond), Economic Development of Assam.
17. Dr. Rebati Mohan Lahiri, D. Phil (Cal), Annexation of Assam.
18. Dr. Maheswar Neog, D. Phil. (Gau), Sankaradeva and His Times.
19. Dr. Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, D. Phil. (Cal), Life of Nawab Mir Jumla.
20. Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarma, D. Phil. (Gau), Vaisnava Institutions of Assam.
21. Dr. Nagendra Nath Acharyya, Ph. D. (Lond), The History of Medieval Assam, 1228-1603.
22. Dr. Upendra Nath Goswami, D. Phil. (Gau), The Kamrupi Dialect of the Assamese Language.
23. Dr. Ajoya Kumar Chakrabarty, D. Phil. (Cal), Literature in Kamata Koch-Bihar-Rajdarbar from 14th-18th century.
24. Dr. Rajatananda Dasgupta, Ph. D. (B. H. U.), Manuscript Painting in Eastern India.
25. Dr. Srimati Lakshmi Devi, D. Phil. (Gau), The Relations of the Ahom Kings with the Tribal peoples of Assam.
26. Dr. Padmeswar Gogoi, D. Phil. (Gau), The Tai and the Tai Kingdom in Assam.
27. Dr. H. V. S. Murthy, D. Phil. (Gau), Vaisnavism of Sankaradeva and Ramanuja a Comparative Study.
28. Dr. Hariṣh Chandra Bhattacharyya, D. Phil. (Gau), Origin and Development of the Assamese Drama and Stage.
29. Dr. Hamlet Bareh, D. Phil. (Gau), Origin and History of the Khasi People.
30. Dr. Narendra Chandra Datta, D. Phil. (Gau), Land Reforms in Assam since Independence.
31. Dr. Promod Chandra Bhattacharyya, D. Phil. (Gau), A Descriptive Analysis of Boro Language.
32. Dr. Minadhar Barthakur, D. Phil. (Gau), A Study in Economic Geography of Lakhimpur.
33. Dr. Nirod Chandra Barua, Ph. D. (London), British rule in Assam.
34. Dr. Satyendra Narayan Goswami, D. Phil. (Cal), Assamese Literature.

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GLOSSARY

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Barpatragohain	Ibid.
Buragohain	Ibid.
Bhuyan	Chief.
Chomdeo	Image of the tutelary deity of the Ahoms.
Dangaria	Nobleman.
Deodhai	Ahom priest.
Deori	Chutia priest.
Dhailung	Ahom priest.
Got	A group of four paiks giving service during the year
Hazarika	Chief over 1000 paiks.
Hengdan	Ancestral sword of the Ahom king.
Kajalimukhia Gohain	Governor of Kajalimukh.
Kamatesvar	King of Kamata.
Khel	Council or Office.
Marangikhowa Gohain	Governor of Marangi (west of Dhansiri).
Mel	Council or Conference.
Namghar	Assembly hall for devotional songs.
Nawab	Chief over 60,000 paiks.
Paik	Foot soldier.
Pura	One and a half acre (of land).
Rikkhavan	Ahom ceremony for obtaining long life.
Sadiyakhowa Gohain	Governor of Sadiya.
Saikia	Chief over 100 paiks.
Saring Raja	Governor of Saring (heir-apparent).
Satra	Religious institution serves to propagate Sankarik cult.
Singarighar	Hall of accession.
Sotal Gohain	Governor of Nowgong.
Svargadeo	Heavenly deity (Honourable title of the Ahom king).
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Sukapha	A tiger from heaven.
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Subinpha	Flying tiger of heaven.
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